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# Doctoral Dissertation

in English Literature

by

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# Religious Alterity and Violence in Contemporary Anglophone Novels by Indian and Pakistani Writers

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## Urheberrechtlicher Hinweis

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## List of Abbreviations

CI *Cracking India* (1991)

R *Riot* (2001)

F *Fireproof* (2006)

SC *Shalimar the Clown* (2005)

# I INTRODUCTION

> I become aware of religious differences. It is sudden. One day everybody is themselves – and the next day they are Hindus, Muslim, Sikh, Christian. People shrink, dwindling into symbols. Ayah is no longer just my all-encompassing Ayah — she is also a token. A Hindu. [...] my nuclear family [is] reduced to irrelevant nomenclatures — we are Parsee. What is God? (CI 101-2)

"What is God?" asks Lenny Sethi, the seven-year-old protagonist of Bapsi Sidhwa's novel *Cracking India* (1991), who is deeply perturbed about the changes occurring in her little world. Living in the city of Lahore in 1947, the Parsee girl is witness to the historical period around the partition of British India along religious lines, which resulted in the creation of the sovereign states of Pakistan[1] and Hindustan.[2] The question 'What is God?' conveys Lenny's state of utter disorientation and doubt: If everyone around her is labelled according to his or her religion,[3] consequently "dwindling into symbols," what about god? Her world is shaken to the core as she realizes that she has to readjust or even abandon the very categories on the basis of which she was used to perceive the world before. Far from being concerned with theological issues, she simply wonders which label of religious identity would be attached to god. Lenny does not question her beliefs or those of others; she is worried about the reductionist power of labels and what this labelling will do to the world as she knows it. Having been ignorant of religious differences before, she now experiences how those formerly unperceived differences become invested with meaning. Unable to grasp why these differences become significant in other people's everyday lives and in her own life as well, Lenny observes the effects of what the Indian philosopher Amartya K. Sen calls "the miniaturization of people" in his study on *Identity and Violence* (xvi) — a process that is prone to "eclipse the relevance of other associations and affiliations through selective emphasis and incitement" (175). Sen, who promotes the view that

[1] Pakistan was officially called the Dominion of Pakistan and came into being on 14th August 1947. In 1971, the armed conflict pitting West Pakistan against East Pakistan (two halves of one country) and India resulted in the secession of East Pakistan to become the independent People's Republic of Bangladesh while West Pakistan became the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

[2] 'Hindustan' was officially called the Union of India (later Republic of India) and came into being on 15th August 1947.

[3] I am well aware of the debates surrounding the term and the concept of 'religion' and will discuss them briefly in the following chapter. I do not, however, presuppose and look for any academic, sophisticated concepts of religion within the fictional texts that are my primary objects of research. It is the fictional representations of religion and religious alterity on the diegetic level, not scholarly discussions on the concept of religion, which are most important in the analyses.

human beings are, and ought to be perceived as, "diversely different" (xvi), warns against the "divisive power of classificatory priority" (Sen 11) and refers to the "disastrous consequences of defining people by their religious ethnicity and giving predetermined priority to the community-based perspective over all other identities" (169). For Sen, the assumption "that people can be uniquely categorized based on religion or culture" is "a major source of potential conflict in the contemporary world" (xv).

The child protagonist of *Cracking India* would most likely agree with Sen's assertions. As Partition approaches, Lenny begins to relate how she becomes aware of the historical events and the political debates of the day and their growing impact even on her own everyday live. She witnesses how the motley group surrounding her beautiful nanny Ayah – men united by bonds of friendship and their unanimous adoration of Ayah despite a multitude of properties and characteristics in which they differ from one another – slowly but inexorably falls apart. Increasingly, the friends begin to disregard what they have in common while they are busy with stressing their religious differences. This process of what I term *hostile Othering* involves "the miniaturization of people" (Sen xvi) — a drastic change in mutual perception that has detrimental consequences: Eventually, the former friends reconstruct each other not only as the religious 'Other' but as the *hostile* religious 'Other' and are willing to resort to cruelty, violence and even murder. In India, the phenomenon of violence resulting from a "community-based perspective" (ibid. 169) has become so familiar since Partition that it has its own name, *communal violence*, which in public discourse is commonly used to describe "violence between people belonging to different religiously denominations."[4]

Religion and religious alterity play a prominent role in the processes of hostile Othering and the ensuing violence described in Sidhwa's novel about Partition. This is not only the case of *Cracking India*'s fictional world. Processes of hostile Othering on the basis of religious alterity and escalations of communal violence are represented in many contemporary novels by Indian and Pakistani writers.[5] In my thesis, I look at the ways in which selected Anglophone

[4] Pandey 2006: 14. The term communal violence and its close relative *communalism* will be looked at in more detail in chapter II. Bipan Chandra defines communalism as "the belief that because a group of people follow a particular religion, they have, as a result, common social, political and economic interests" (1).

[5] For an overview of fictional narratives on religious alterity and violence by South Asian writers since 1947 see pp. 14-27 of the introduction. On the subgenre of the Anglophone South Asian Novel see especially Fakrul Alam's *South Asian Writers in English* (ed. 2006); Paul Brians' *Modern South Asian Literature in English* (2003); Sisir Kumar Das' *A History of Indian Literature* (2 vols. 1991-1995); Priyamvada Gopal's *The Indian English Novel* (2009); Tabish Kahir's *Babu Fictions: Alienation in*

contemporary novels by Indian and Pakistani writers refer to, represent and discuss historical and contemporary events that have repeatedly been categorized as examples of 'religious violence,' i.e. violent conflicts where the religious identities of both perpetrators and victims were the major reason or pretense for their involvement in those conflicts. These events include Partition 1947 (*Cracking India*), the riots accompanying the Ram Janmabhumi campaign in the early 1990s (*Riot*), the anti-Muslim pogrom in Gujarat 2002 (*Fireproof*), and the Kashmir conflict (*Shalimar the Clown*). Embedded as they are in the 'real,' empirical world as cultural artefacts and "inter-discourse" (Nünning), these novels engage with and respond to what they are surrounded by — a world abounding with violence and violent conflicts which seem to be directly related to religion in one way or another. But does that mean that religion as such or some of its aspects are inherently violent? And how do literary texts discuss that question?

The question of religion's relation to violence is a highly controversial one. It has been discussed widely by many scholars from different academic disciplines,[6] ranging from history of religions[7] and theology,[8] probably the most obvious fields to focus on the topic, to philosophy,[9] anthropology,[10] cultural studies,[11] political science,[12] law,[13]sociology,[14] psychology,[15] and even

*Contemporary Indian English Novels* (2005); Arvind Krishna Mehrotra's *An Illustrated History of Indian Literature in English* (ed. 2003); and Khushwant Singh's *The HarperCollins book of new Indian Fiction: Contemporary Writing in English* (ed. 2005).

[6] A short overview of the multifaceted debate on the relation between religion and violence is given in chapter II of this thesis.

[7] E.g. *When Religious becomes Lethal: The Explosive Mix of Politics and Religion in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam* (2002), by Charles Kimball; *Holy Terrors. Thinking about Religion after September 11* (2003), by Bruce Lincoln; and *Fields of Blood. Religion and the History of Violence* (2014), by Karen Armstrong.

[8] E.g. *The Myth of Religious Violence. Secular Ideology and the Roots of Modern Conflicts*. (2009), by William T. Cavanaugh.

[9] E.g. *Religion and Violence. Philosophical Perspectives from Kant to Derrida* (2002), ed. by Hent de Vries and *The Justification of Religious Violence* (2014), by Steve Clarke.

[10] E.g. *Violence and the Sacred* (1986 [1972]) by René Girard; *Cruel Creeds, Virtuous Violence. Religious Violence across Culture and History* (2010), by Jack David Eller. Girard's study is undoubtedly one of the most influential discussions on the topic. As Eller points out, Girard "virtually equates religion with violence—or at least with the human struggle to contain violence—and therefore virtually equates religion with sacrifice" (105).

[11] E.g. *Moses the Egyptian* (1997) and *The Price of Monotheism* (2010 [2003]), by Jan Assmann.

[12] E.g. *Religion and Political Violence*. (2011), by Jennifer L. Jefferis.

[13] E.g. *Religious Hatred and International Law*. (2016), by Jeroen Temperman.

[14] E.g. *Sacred Fury: Understanding Religious Violence* (2008), by Charles Selengut; and *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence* (2000), by Mark Juergensmeyer.

linguistics[16] and pedagogy.[17] [18] Many publications on the topic reflect its interdisciplinarity by including texts by scholars from different disciplines, [19] or, in the case of monographs, by being intrinsically interdisciplinary. [20] Despite the multitude of publications and approaches addressing the questions if religion is inherently violent or can become "evil,"[21] the baselines of most answers are highly similar and generally fall into one of two categories, irrespective of the discipline: "They either exaggerate religion's role, denouncing it as the root cause of all conflict, or they deny that 'real' religion could be responsible in any way for indiscriminate violence" (McTernan 20). There is a third category, and the positions in it are often hardly distinguishable from the one claiming 'real' religion's innocence. Scholars like the anthropologist Jack David Eller conceptualize religion as something man-made, an 'institution' that "is neither a purely good thing nor a purely bad thing, neither a peaceful thing nor a violent thing" (2010: 8). "Like all human institutions," Eller argues, religion "is an ambiguous and contradictory thing. It is, in the end, a human thing—as flawed and paradoxical as we humans are" (ibid.). Regardless of the discipline and the answers given, it is evident that "the world is awash in books on religion and violence" (Eller 2010: 7). So it seems legitimate to ask, as Eller does in the introduction to his own monograph, "Why do we need another book on

[15] E.g. *The Fundamentalist Mindset: Psychological Perspectives on Religion, Violence, and History* (2010), ed. by James W. Jones; and *The Colours of Violence: Cultural Identities, Religion, and Conflict* (1996), by Sudhir Kakar.

[16] E.g. *The Weight of Violence. Religion, Language and Politics* (2015), ed. by Saitya B. Das and Soumyabrata Choudhury.

[17] E.g. *Teaching Religion and Violence* (2012), ed. by Brian K. Pennington.

[18] The number of publications on the topic of religious violence multiplies with a more specific the focus, for example a specific culture, geographical region, religious tradition or historical period.

[19] The numerous examples of multi-disciplinary publications include Religion and Violence. An Encyclopaedia of Faith and Conflict form Antiquity to the Present (2010), ed. by Jeffrey I. Ross; The Blackwell Companion to Religion and Violence (2011), ed. by Andrew R. Murphy; Princeton Readings in Religion and Violence (2011), ed. and introd. by Mark Juergensmeyer and Margo Kitts; The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Violence (2013), ed. by Mark Juergensmeyer, Margo Kitts and Michael Jerryson. The tri-annual online Journal of Religion and Violence (2013- ) is "devoted to the interdisciplinary study of religion and violence" (https://www.pdcnet.org/pdc/bvdb.nsf/journal?openform&journal=pdc_jrv, accessed 25.12.2015). According to its editors Michael Jerryson and Margo Kitts, it was "established in response to the interest in religion and violence that emerged as a consequence of tragic events in recent decades" (ibid.).

[20] E.g. *Understanding Religious Violence* (2004), by J.P.Larsson. Actually, many publications on the topic, including most of those mentioned above, draw on sources and insights from more than one discipline. The topic has a tendency to easily breach neat borderlines between academic disciplines.

[21] As is clearly indicated by its title, Charles Kimball's *When Religion Becomes Evil* (2003) claims that religion as such is not 'evil' but contains elements that, if exaggerated or misappropriated by its followers, corrupt religion and render it evil.

the subject?" (ibid.) Eller's justification is that "while many previous books have made important contributions to our understanding of this essential phenomenon, non has quite finished the job" (2010: 7) due to restrictedness of perspective, lack of scope and vagueness concerning central concepts like religion and violence.

## I.1 Why Look at Literary Texts? Comments on the Uses of Literature

As a literary scholar, I certainly do not aim to 'finish the job,' as Eller terms it. But I think it is eminent to look at the ways in which literary texts respond to historical events commonly categorized as religious violence, and how they discuss the relation between religion and violence. As deeply rooted in the context of the real world as the phenomena they respond to and discuss, literary fiction about religiously connoted violence to me is an indispensable source of valuable insights both into the phenomenon itself and the discourses surrounding it in a specific time and place. I certainly agree with Ansgar Nünning and Marion Gymnich who consider literary fiction as "selbständiger Teil von gesellschaftlichen und kulturellen Entwicklungen" (14), which has the power to create "eigenständige fiktionale Wirklichkeitsmodelle" by virtue of its "literaturspezifischen Darstellungsverfahren" (14). Instead of seeing literary texts are mere reproductions or imitations of reality, I again follow Nünnign and Gymnich who argue that they are "eine aktive ‚Antwort' auf sich wandelnde kulturelle Kontexte" (Nünning and Gymnich 13). Like them I presuppose a complex and intensive "Wechselwirkung zwischen Literatur und ausserliterarischer Wirklichkeit" (14) and conceive of literary texts as "eine aktive kognitive Kraft, die an der Generierung von Einstellungen, Diskursen, Ideologien, Werten, Denk- und Wahrnehmungsmustern massgeblich beteiligt ist" (14). Last but not least, I believe that approaching literary texts for gaining insights concerning the discourses about religious alterity in India is especially valid when those located in the respective specific socio-cultural setting assign the aforementioned status and related functions to those literary texts.

Irrespective of specific settings, I am certainly in good company when I claim that literary fiction is a medium ideally suited to address and discuss existential and controversial questions. For hundreds of years, philosophers, literary scholars and cultural critics have written about the "singularity of literature"[22] as well as literature's continuing relevance and manifold functions

[22] Derek Attridge uses this term in his eponymous book *The Singularity of Literature* (2004).

for individuals and society as a whole.[23] Scholars widely agree that literary texts have the *potential* of fulfilling relevant anthropological and social functions[24] and that this potential is inextricably related to their singular power to kindle the human imagination and "enchant"[25] by virtue of their aesthetic features. It is certainly important to emphasise the difference as well as the relation between the aesthetic features and the functions of literary texts. Following Ansgar Nünning and Marion Gymnich it is necessary to acknowledge that the aesthetic ("das Ästhetische") is "eine Energie in jenem Prozess, der erst eine Wirkung auf den Leser — und damit auch eine Verwirklichung des Funktionspotentials — möglich macht" (17).

In fact, one cannot stress enough the importance of literature's aesthetic functions or "ästhetische Wirkungsstruktur" (Fluck 1997:19) for any of its real or assumed social functions: Endorsing Fluck's view, Nünning and Gymnich claim that literature's aesthetic functions should be given "eine Sonderstellung im Spektrum möglicher Funktionen" because they consider them "grundlegend für das Wirkungspotential von Literatur" (11). Postulating the existence of a close "Interdependenzverhältnis von ästhetischen und sozialen Funktionen" (12), Nünning and Gymnich argue that the formal features of literary texts are "nicht kontigent oder bedeutungsindifferent" but "‚semantisiert' [...], also in vielfältiger Weise mit Bedeutung

[23] The corpus of texts dedicated to the various potential functions of literature and the reasons for the study of literature is of considerable size. Among the most relevant of recent publications for this study are the following titles: David Novitz' *The Boundaries of Art* (1992), Martha C. Nussbaum's *Poetic Justice* (1995), Rüdiger Ahrens and Laurenz Volkmann's (eds.) *Why Literature Matters. Theories and Functions of Literature* (1996), Margit Sutrop's *Fiction and Imagination* (2000), Derek Attridge's *The Singularity of Literature* (2004), Frank B. Farrell's *Why does Literature Matter?* (2004), Marion Gymnich and Ansgar Nünning's (eds.) *Funktionen von Literatur. Theoretische Grundlagen und Modellinterpretationen* (2005), Mark William Roche's *Why Literature Matters in the 21st Century* (2005), Thomas Claviez' *Aesthetic Transgressions* (ed. 2006); Stefan Neuhaus and Johann Holzner's (eds.) *Literatur als Skandal* (2007), Rita Felski's *Uses of Literature* (2008); and Jan Alber's (et al., eds.) *Why Study Literature?* (2011).

[24] An important point made by Nünning and Gymnich is that, in reflections about the functions of literature, function and effect are often not properly distinguished and used interchangeably. They argue that the term of function ("Funktionsbegriff") usually comprises three core aspects: the intended effect ("*Wirkungsintention*") of the empirical author or the "Modell-Author" *sinu* Umberto Eco constructed by the reader in the reading process, the effect potential ("*Wirkungspotential*") of literary texts and their historically verifiable effects ("*historisch nachweisbaren Wirkungen*") (9). Following Winfried Fluck (1997) and Roy Sommer (2000) they insist that literary texts as such do not have functions (",besitzen'... keine Funktionen") and claim that all statements about the functions of literature are only "Funktionszuschreibungen seitens der Rezipienten," which have the status of "*Funktionshypothesen*". These hypotheses, they warn, "können und sollen also nicht mit soziologischen oder empirischen Beschreibungen der tatsächlichen Wirkung(en) der jeweiligen Texte auf spezifische Leser in bestimmten historischen und kulturellen Kontexten gleichgesetzt werden." (11)

[25] This term, capturing the idea that readers of literary texts seek and experience pleasure through immersion in fictional worlds, is taken from Rita Felski's *Uses of Literature* (2008). In her self-proclaimed "odd manifesto" (1), Felski outlines four primary functions of literary texts: "recognition," "enchantment," "knowledge" and "shock" (*Uses of Literature*).

aufgeladen": "Form und Funktion sind in literarischen Texten notwendig auf das engste miteinander verbunden" (12). From their supposition of the "Semantisierung literarischer Formen" they conclude the great importance of taking into account the formal features of a literary text when making assumptions about its potential functions: "Eine Auseinandersetzung mit literarischen Darstellungsverfahren ist folglich für begründete Hypothesen über das Funktionspotential eines literarischen Textes oder einer Gruppe von Texten unerlässlich" (13).

As Jan Alber, Stefan Iversen, Louise Brix Jacobsen, Rikke Andersen Kraglund, Henrik Skov Nielsen and Camilla Møhring Reestorff point out in their introduction to *Why Literature Matters* (2011), "[l]iterary scholars and critics have during the previous decade written quite extensively on the reasons why literature matters" (8). Alber et al. present a list of functions of literature and claim that many scholars and critics had produced and reproduced some or all of those features time and again:

> - an exercise in empathy; the reader gains insight into lives and thoughts of other people
> - an encounter with otherness and/or singularity
> - a scene where one can encounter friendship and guidance in life through a mirror of society or history; because of what one conceives as the solitude and singularity of the individual reader literature supposedly holds up a mirror in which every reader sees something different
> - a privileged medium for studying points of view (a perspective which has since been adopted by a series of other fields and disciplines)
> - a means of improving the ethical judgments of readers– a place of beauty and aesthetic experiences.[26]

One of the most relevant functions with regard to my reasons for approaching the literary texts in my study is what Alber et al. describe as literature's suitability as "a privileged medium for studying points of view" (8). Being a part of public discourse just like factual texts, literary fiction, constituting "einen imaginativen Spezialdiskurs" (Nünning and Gymnich echoing Iser 2003), has many advantages over them. On the one hand, fictional texts are free to use facts, and yet are unbound by the shackles of facticity like newspaper articles, academic publications or political speeches. Literary fiction can blend 'fact' and fiction to tell its own truths. It can combine verifiable historical events with "thought experiments" through which it "'tries on' or 'tries out' an ontological proposition 'What if?' and then builds a scale-model world in which to

[26] Alber, Iversen, Jacobsen, Kraglund, Nielsen, and Reestorff 8. While one could argue that the list of Alber et al. is neither exhaustive nor overly precise, I consider it a useful starting point for outlining my position.

develop some of the possible consequences of that proposition."[27] In spite of all those resources at its disposal, it does not have to give straightforward, clear answers or take any definite position. Instead, as Michael Jackson points out, fictional texts often do the opposite: "Whether considered in the light of their function, form, or performance, stories create indeterminate and ambiguous situations that involve contending parties, contrasted locations, opposing categories of thought, and antithetical domains of experience." (25) Ironically, it is precisely literature's capacity for deep equivocality that enables it to do more justice to complex topics and precarious questions such as those concerning religion and violence than factual texts could ever do. Literary fiction potentially allows contradictory positions to exist side by side within the same text, raising more questions than it answers and yet yielding a deeper understanding of complex topics and the unfathomable and inscrutable nature of their complexity, than any factual text can.

Presupposing the on-going fragmentation of society as a whole and the increasing differentiation of those fragments and their specialised discourses, Nünning and Gymnich conceptualise literature as "reintegrierender Interdiskurs" (18), a concept they adopt from Jürgen Link (1986, 1988). Referring to Link, they claim that literary texts are able to integrate the different specialised discourses of a society and relate them to each other in complex ways.[28] As Nünning puts it, they have the ability, "eine Vielfalt von Diskursen aus der Textumwelt mitsamt ihren Themen, Perspektiven und Konventionen im Kontext der Fiktion integrierend aufeinander zu beziehen" (Nünning 1996: 78, 80). Rather than being a mere "mirror of society or history" (Alber et al. 8) fictional texts potentially provide a multi perspectival, complex image not only of the self-image(s) of socio-cultural communities or their segments but also of the various ways communities are perceived from the outside. On a fictional level, they can make accessible a great variety of disparate specialized discourses to their respective outsiders, blending or contrasting specialized discourses, and thus linking various increasingly self-

[27] McHale 2011: 144. While McHale specifically looks at science fiction in this essay, he insists that "under certain circumstances, literature is indeed capable of conducting thought experiments and producing innovative world-models" (ibid. 148) and suggests that this is an important reason for studying literature. An informed discussion of literature as "thought experiment" can be found in Peter Swirski's *On Literature and Knowledge* (2007). Swirski claims that "the capacity of literary fictions for generating nonfictional knowledge owes to their capacity for doing what philosophy and science do — generating thought experiments" (4).

[28] Nünning and Gymnich 18. While Link acknowledges that other specialised discourses like journalistic texts have the same function, he insists that for literary texts it is one of the most defining functions. (Link 1986: 135)

contained, differentiated sections of society and — potentially — enhancing their mutual understanding.

I agree with Michael Jackson (2002), however, who points out that this ability of literary fiction to include, refer to, oppose and parody a great number and heterogeneity of discourses simultaneously, of "traversing the borderlands that ordinarily demarcate different social domains, or that separate any particular social order from all that lies at or beyond its margins" (25), does not have homogeneous or even predictable effects on every reader. Asserting that "[s]tories are always structurally in-between," Jackson claims that they "have the potential to take us in two very different directions":

> On the one hand, they may confirm our belief that otherness is just as we had imagined it to be — best kept at a distance, best denied — in which case the story will screen out everything that threatens the status quo, validating the illusions and prejudices it customarily deploys in maintaining its hold on truth. On the other hand, stories may confound or call into question our ordinarily taken for granted notions of identity and difference, and so push back and pluralise our horizons of knowledge.[29]

According to Jackson, then, literature's ability of staging the "encounter with otherness and/or singularity" (Alber et al. 8), of giving insights even into the workings of inaccessible areas and places like the mind of the unknown, unknowable Other, does not necessarily entail changes of ideas and perceptions in the individual or even social change. The view that the confrontation with alterity in literary texts does not result in the understanding and assimilation of the Other, or even the elimination of alterity, is shared by quite a few philosophers and literary scholars. According to Monika Fludernik, encountering the Other has in fact the opposite effect on readers (and protagonists) who both "end up reasserting themselves against this alterity, continuing to repress and repulse the o/Other" (2008: 264).

Conversely, philosophers and literary scholars are generally convinced of literature's singular aptitude for staging alterity, irrespective of its potential social functions, and agree that this aptitude is inextricably related to its specific aesthetic features. Käte Hamburger claims that fiction is "the only place where another' consciousness can be represented" (cited in Fludernik 2007: 265). Reviewing different studies on alterity and its representation in her study on postcolonial constructions of the Other (das Fremde) in German literature, Narjes Khodaee Kalathebali detects a general "Konsens darüber, dass mehr als jedes andere Medium der

[29] 25. One might argue that there is a third alternative, namely that literary texts have the potential to have no effect on their readers in that respect whatsoever.

literarische Text die Bereitschaft mit sich bringt, sich auf das Fremde einzulassen."[30] Walter Hinderer, who establishes close links between the study of literature and the study of alterity, states: "Literarische Texte, also die res fictae, haben die besondere Fähigkeit, Alterität in jeder Form, also res factae, ästhetisch zu vermitteln" (215). Fludernik argues similarly when she claims that "narrative is, basically, about the depiction and recuperation of alterity" (2008: 264). Literature's aptitude for representing alterity and staging encounters with the Other has been pointed out by many scholars and is one of the most important reasons given for its "singularity" (Attridge).

Most scholars agree that apart from simply representing alterity, literature is "an exercise in empathy" (Alber et al.) that has the potential to engender recognition, acknowledgement and a degree of understanding in its readers, enabling them to "come to terms with, the Other" (Fludernik 2008: 264). Some scholars go even further and believe that literary texts are "a means of improving the ethical judgments of readers" (Alber et al. 8) and make them refine the ways in which they behave and interact with others/the Other in society – a claim made most elegantly by Martha C. Nussbaum in *Poetic Justice* (1995). While I would not share Nussbaums slightly idealistic view, I am convinced that by representing alterity literature induces the recognition and acknowledgement of the Other and thereby establishes the conditions *sine qua non* for understanding and empathy.

My position regarding the potential socio-cultural functions of literary fiction is, like that of Nünning and Gymnich, close to that of Hubert Zapf who conceptualizes literature as "kulturelle Ökologie" (2005). Zapf claims that literature has three distinct albeit closely related cultural ecological functions: It can be "kulturkritischer Metadiskurs," "imaginativer Gegendiskurs" and "reintegrativer Interdiskurs."[31] These three socio-cultural functions Zapf assigns to literary texts are based on his conceptualization of literature's role as

> *Sensorium und symbolische Ausgleichsinstanz* für kulturelle Fehlentwicklungen und Ungleichgewichte, als kritische Bilanzierung dessen, was durch dominante geschichtliche

[30] "Betrachtet man die Problemdarstellungen der verschiedenen Untersuchungen zum Fremdheitsthema, so besteht ein Konsens darüber, dass mehr als jedes andere Medium der literarische Text die Bereitschaft mit sich bringt, sich auf das Fremde einzulassen." Khodaee Kalatehbali 10.

[31] Zapf 2005: 67. Although Zapf's term "reintegrativer Interdiskurs" is nearly identical with Links' "reintegrierender Interdiskurs," the two terms do not refer to the same ideas. Zapf presupposes the existence of power hierarchies among the specialised discourses of society and expects literature to give voice to the marginalised and repressed ones. There are no such implications in Link who focuses on the mere bringing together of societies increasingly specialised discourses in literature without indicating the existence of processes of marginalisation or repression.

> Machtstrukturen, Diskurssysteme und Lebensformen an den Rand gedrängt, vernachlässigt, ausgegrenzt oder unterdrückt wird, was aber für eine angemessene komplexe Bestimmung erfahrbarer menschlicher Realität innerhalb dieser Systeme und Entwicklungen von unabweisbarer Bedeutung ist. (Zapf 2002: 3)

According to Zapf's first function of literature as "kulturkritischer Metadiskurs," literary texts perform the "Repräsentation typischer Defizite, Einseitigkeiten, Blindstellen und Widersprüche dominanter politischer, ökonomischer, ideologischer oder pragmatisch-utilitaristischer Systeme zivilisatorischer Macht" (2002: 64) in such a way as to deconstruct and criticise the structures and processes it represents. Secondly, when functioning as "imaginativer Gegendiskurs," claims Zapf, literary fiction has the potential to represent on the fictional level "was im kulturellen Realitätssystem marginalisiert, vernachlässigt oder unterdrückt ist" (ibid. 64). Even if fictional texts are part of public discourse and are thereby conscious of its conventions regarding taboos and unsayable things, they are something like an unruly, impertinent child in the family. They are the black sheep that are unpredictable in the ways they respond to things; they are expected to potentially breach boundaries, to ignore conventions and unwritten rules, to 'behave' in ways no other family member does or would ever do. The statements and opinions of an unruly child can be acknowledged and taken seriously but they do not have to be. They can simply be dismissed as irrelevant and are therefore easily contained. Due to their status as black sheep among all the voices of public discourse, fictional texts have a kind of carte blanche for raising topics that other text cannot raise, at least not in the complex and at the same time unapologetic way literary text can. They might be disliked for it but at the same time they are indispensable. Through them, unheard voices, untold stories and repressed views, which would otherwise disrupt the relative peace in the family, find a haven and an outlet.

The third function Zapf assigns to literature is that it operates as "reintegrativer Interdiskurs," which is characterized by the joining of the "kulturell Getrennten" (2002: 65) and relates to each other "das Ausgegrenzte und das kulturelle Realitätssystem" (ibid. 66). By virtue of these acts of 'reintegrative representation,' Zapf asserts, literary texts are apt to engender "konfliktorische Prozesse und krisenhafte Turbulenzen" that, ideally, bring about the "Erneuerung des kulturellen Zentrums von dessen Rändern her" (ibid. 65). Literature's potential for engendering socio-cultural renewal and reformation is also pointed out by Wolfgang Iser. Referring back to William R. Paulson's *The Noise of Culture* (1988), Iser conceptualises literature as a "perturbing noise" (Iser 16) in modern, technocratic culture: a noise which creates "a space for unpredictability and invention" (Iser 18).

Closely intertwined with the functions outlined by Zapf is literature's role as a place of cultural memory.[32] Originally formulated by Pierre Nora and later made widely known through the influential *Lieux de Mémoire* (1984- ) in three volumes edited by him, it has been expanded and refined by many scholars of literature und culture and has since been called a new paradigm in the cultural sciences. Astrid Erll, who has researched widely on the topic, claims that "literarische Werke neben Denkmälern, Riten, religiösen oder historischen Schriften ein wichtiges Medium kultureller Erinnerung darstellen" (2002: 251). Literary texts, she claims, can stage cultural memory and processes of remembering in manifold ways, for example through elements on the story level like in the case of historical novels, in the constitution of the perspectival structure, by statements of the narrating voice, by juxtaposing different time levels and by charging fictional places and spaces with meaning.[33] In view of the intensive interdependence of memory and remembering on the one hand and identity and processes of identity formation on the other hand, the eminent relevance of literature's role as medium of cultural memory becomes especially evident.[34] Seen together with the three functions of literary texts as outlined by Zapf, literature as medium of cultural memory has the potential to fulfil another important function: Literary texts are able to represent those memories that are marginalised or even repressed in dominant discourses in the public sphere, lay bare and criticise the processes of marginalisation and repression of memories und outline the potentially detrimental consequences of these processes for those individuals and for society as a whole.

An important example of literature representing repressed or obliterated memories and experiences is the genre of trauma fiction[35]. The potential function of literature to represent

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[32] On the topic of literature as place or medium of cultural memory see especially Astrid Erll et al.', eds. *Medien des kollektiven Gedächtnisses* (2004); Astrid Erll's *Kollektives Gedächtnis und Erinnerungskulturen* (2005). Birgit Neumann's *Erinnerung - Identität – Narration. Gattungstypologie und Funktionen kanadischer "Fictions of memory"*. (2005).

[33] Erll 2002: 273-274 according to Nünning and Gymnich 20.

[34] On the topic of the close interrelation between (individual and cultural) identity on the one hand and memory on the other hand, see especially the following texts: Aleida Assmann et al.'s (eds.) *Identitäten* (1998), *Medien des Gedächtnisses* (1998); Aleida Assmann's *Erinnerungsräume: Formen und Wandlungen des kulturellen Gedächtnisses* (2006 [1999]); Jan Assmann's "Collective Memory and Cultural Identity" (1995); Astrid Erll et al.'s (eds.) *Medien des kollektiven Gedächtnisses* (2004); Astrid Erll's *Kollektives Gedächtnis und Erinnerungskulturen* (2005); and Birgit Neumann's *Erinnerung - Identität – Narration. Gattungstypologie und Funktionen kanadischer "Fictions of memory"*. (2005).

[35] On trauma literature see especially Michelle Balaev's "Literary Trauma Theory Reconsidered" (2014); Michelle Balaev's (ed.) *Contemporary Approaches in Literary Trauma Theory* (2014); Cathy Caruth's *Unclaimed Experiences* (1996), Ronald Granofsky's *The Trauma Novel* (1995); Ann E. Kaplan's *Trauma*

memories of traumatizing events is of especial interest to me because many of the experiences represented in the novels analysed in my thesis are traumatic ones. In my definition of this kind of fiction I follow Michelle Balaev who defines the "trauma novel" as

> a work of fiction that conveys profound loss or intense fear on individual or collective levels. A defining feature of the trauma novel is the transformation of the self ignited by an external, often terrifying experience, which illuminates the process of coming to terms with the dynamics of memory that inform the new perceptions of the self and world. The external event that elicits an extreme response from the protagonist is not necessarily bound to a collective human or natural disaster such as war or tsunamis. The event may include, for example, the intimately personal experience of female sexual violence. (Balaev 2008: 149-150)

The question of the sheer (non-)representability of traumatic experiences lies at the heart of most trauma fiction and theories about this kind of literature.[36] Early psychoanalytic poststructural approaches sensu Cathy Caruth (1996) conceptualized "trauma as unrepresentable event" (Balaev 2014: 1) and emphasized "linguistic indeterminancy, ambiguous referentiality, and aporia" (ibid.). Some alternative, more recent approaches define trauma in a way that "allows for a range of representational possibilities" (Balaev 2014: 2). These pluralistic approaches have taken advantage of the fact that "the history of the concept of trauma is filled with contradictory theories and contentious debates," which enabled them "to work with varying definitions of trauma and its effects" (ibid.) Focusing on "trauma's specificity and the processes of remembering" and acknowledging "the range of contextual factors that specify the value of [traumatic] experience" (ibid.), these approaches assume that "trauma's function in literature and society is more varied and curious than first imagined by early theorists" (ibid. 4). Balaev points out that by considering "the multiple meanings of trauma that may be found within and between the spheres of personal and public worlds," propounders of these approaches provide "views both of the individual and society, rather than consolidating the experience of trauma into a singular, silent ghost" (ibid. 5). They challenge the assumption "that knowledge of the past, not just any past but a particular type of past experience, can never be known or remains forever unclaimed by either the individual or society" (ibid. 4).

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*Culture* (2005); Dominick LaCapra's *Writing History, Writing Trauma* (2001); Gabriele Rippl et al.'s (eds.) *Haunted Narratives* (2013); Kalí Tal *Words of Hurt* (1996); Laurie Vickroy's *Trauma and Survival in Contemporary Fiction* (2002); Laurie Vickroy's "Voices of Survivors in Contemporary Fiction" (2014); and Anne Whitehead's *Trauma Fiction* (2004).

[36] As Balaev (2014: 1) points out, the "psychoanalytic poststructural approach" of theorists like Caruth had a huge and long-lasting impact on literary trauma theory. Conceptualizing "trauma as unrepresentable event," this approach "suggests that trauma is an unsolvable problem of the unconscious that illuminates the inherent contradictions of experience and language" (ibid.).

An important voice arguing for the representability of traumatizing events through literary fiction is that of Dominick LaCapra. In his influential *Writing History, Writing Trauma*, LaCapra claims that fictional texts are able to provide "insight" into historical events that caused traumatic experiences "by offering a reading of a process or period, or by giving at least a plausible 'feel' for experience and emotion which may be difficult to arrive at through restricted documentary methods." (LaCapra 2001: 13) Trauma fiction potentially turns readers into "secondary witness[es]" and engenders in them a state of "emphatic unsettlement," which "is important in attempting to understand traumatic events and victims" (ibid. 78). In line with LaCapra, Laurie Vickroy argues for the representability of traumatic events and their effects on human beings in fiction. Vickroy believes that with her concept of "trauma as collectively and situationally-driven, the possibilities for telling increase" (2014: 140). Like LaCapra, she assigns great importance to the aesthetic characteristics of fiction for the representation of traumatic experience, claiming that it is by virtue of "familiar literary elements" that "trauma fiction creates constructs of that experience" (2014: 138) and is able to "imaginatively place readers into difficult and alienating situations" (ibid. 137). According to her, fictional texts are able to provide "readers with a wealth of thick description of the conditions and characteristics of traumatic experiences" (ibid. 137) and have the potential to "represent trauma beyond the unspeakable and repetitive by depicting survivors as deeply interconnected to social networks" (ibid. 149). Vickroy is convinced of fiction's "unique capacity to represent the interweaving of the environment and human responses" and argues that "fiction illustrates the creation of emotional and cognitive patterns arising out of trauma that in turn shape social attitudes and structures of living" (ibid. 137). In her view, fictional representations of trauma do not only "demonstrate the silencing power of the environment, but also the possibility of critiquing its delusional premises" (ibid.). Echoing LaCapra's concept of "emphatic unsettlement," she suggests that "[e]ffective trauma texts engage readers in a critical process by immersing them in, and yet providing perspective on, the flawed thinking, feeling, and behaviour of the traumatized individual" (ibid. 138).

In some cases, like in the case of the atrocities during India's partition along religious lines, such a great number of individuals in India and Pakistan were traumatized by the same chain of events that it is appropriate to speak of a collective trauma. This trauma, alongside ensuing processes of memory repression and acting-out, is a constitutive element of the fundament of both India and Pakistan and is deeply concerned with the precarious question of the relation between religion and violence. I consider the study of fictional texts about Partition and more

recent instances of religious violence an enriching as well as efficient way to obtain insights into the ideas, positions and discourses which pervade India's society concerning the processes of 'hostile Othering' on the basis of religious alterity and its relation to acts of violence.

## I.2 Literatures of Partition and Communal Violence: Functions and Overview

The discourse of religious alterity pervades the political and socio-cultural spheres of present day India. The memories of Partition, communal violence — "as violence between people belonging to different religiously denominations is called in India"[37] — and instances of violence caused by religious fanaticism, all of which are in some way or other associated with the issue of religious alterity, constitute a recurrent phenomenon in everyday life of many Indian citizens. And yet, for the large majority of Indian citizens the gory, personal details of the violence and loss that accompanied Partition and instances of communal violence today remain a taboo topic in the dominant discourses of the public sphere.

Many South Asian scholars from such different fields as social anthropology,[38] history[39] and literary studies[40] have pointed out that there exists a considerable discrepancy between Indian citizens' experiences and the ways these experiences are usually contextualized and represented in most areas of public discourse such as newspapers articles, political speeches, history books or academic publications. On the one hand, the experiences made during Partition and instances of communal violence today are of undiminished relevance for most Indian citizens, many of whom would need to tell the stories of these experiences or listen to those of others in order to come to terms with the past events. On the other hand, there is the lack, sometimes the outright oppression on the part of the Indian state, of any attempt at initiating a detailed discussion or even working through of these experiences in the public sphere. Both this discrepancy and the need of survivors to tell their stories and listen to or read stories that deal imaginatively with their traumatizing pasts have been pointed out by many scholars, among

[37] Pandey 2006: 14. The terms communal violence and

[38] See especially Veena Das' *Mirrors of Violence* (ed. 1990) and Urvashi Butalia's *The Other Side of Silence* (2000).

[39] See especially Gyanendra Pandey's "In Defence of the Fragment" (1992) and *Routine Violence* (2006).

[40] See for example Alok Bhalla's *Stories about the Partition of India* (ed. 1994), Saros Cowasjee and K.S. Duggal's *Orphans of the Storm: Stories on Partition of India* (eds. 1995), Mushirul Hasan's *Inventing Boundaries* (2000), Ananya Kabir's "Gender, Memory, Trauma: Women's Novels on the Partition of India" (2005), Arora Neera and R.K. Dhawan's "Remembering Partition" (2010), Ravikant and Tarun K. Saint's "Introduction" to *Translating Partition* (2001), Ravikant Saint's "Partition: Strategies of Oblivion, Ways of Remembering" (2001), and many others.

them the social anthropologists Urvashi Butalia (1998) and Veena Das (1990a, 1990b), the historian Gyanendra Pandey (2002, 2006) and many literary scholars such as Mushirul Hasan (2000), Arora Neera and R. K. Dhawan (2010), Ravikant Saint (2001), and Ravikant and Tarun K. Saint (2001). Ravikant Saint, who edited one of the recent publications containing Partition narratives, sketches the image of the Indian people as a person that is not acknowledging or confronting the reality of the consequences of the past but is fast asleep and "sleepwalking" through the dream of an untroubled and glorious national narrative. He laments that

> till recently, we [...] have been sleepwalking through these decades until an odd film or a novel, or the actuality of a riot awakens us to momentarily remember and refer back to the nightmare of the Partition. The nation has grown up, ritually counting and celebrating birthdays — its own and of the great souls that won it the freedom — while systematically consigning Partition to oblivion. (2001: 160)

Clearly, while Saint deplores that the memory of Partition was systematically consigned to oblivion, he claims that novels (and films), like riots, but in a less painful way, have the power to activate people's memories and establish a link to the repressed past. And yet, his words also betray a sense of disappointment concerning the number of publications that thematize Partition as he talks of "an odd film or novel" and not, for example, 'all those many films and novels, newspaper reports and scholarly publications.' Similar to Saint's assessment there are many other, and also more pronounced, articulations of a "widely felt sense of dearth" of works about Partition (Saint 2001: 161). These assessments do not imply, however, that there is a general lack of writings on Partition. They rather point to a lack of publications that represent certain "ways of seeing" (ibid.). As Saint remarks, while "there has been a constant flow of well-researched volumes on different aspects of the subject," especially historical accounts or biographies of famous politicians, these works usually focus on Partition in terms of "transfer of power" and feature an "obsessive concern with causation" resulting in "analysis of the goings-on in the domain of high politics" (ibid.). Conversely, Partition is treated as an "aberration," as "nationalism gone awry" and the "other" of Independence," Saint claims, which "amounts to nothing less than a form of self-denial, a flight as it were, a tendency to run away from the harsh realities of the past" (ibid.). This general tendency of approaching the history of Partition has often been explained in terms of "the continued state of tension and conflict between 'Hindus' and 'Muslims' on the one hand, and India and Pakistan on the other" (ibid.).

> Riots inside and wars on the front are occasional yet violent expressions of the uneasy [...] relationships between the communities and the nations. Partition — the event, memory and metaphor — indubitably remains central to this long history of strife and warfare. As a

> result, there exists a liberal consensus whereby issues of communal violence in general, and Partition in particular, are disallowed any serious space not only in children's histories, but also in adult discourses. The device of declaring certain issues as "sensitive," and taboo, has meant, for all practical purposes, an undeclared ban on them, making writing or any other practice a difficult exercise. (Ibid. 162)

Sidelined and even silenced in discourses dominating the public sphere like newspaper articles and political speeches "in the name of the ever-lurking fear of a possible riot" and for the sake of keeping a fragile communal[41] peace, representations of Partition, accounts of the experiences of the "great human tragedy" in the past and writings on contemporary communal riots are relegated to the privacy of home and the imaginary realm of fiction (ibid.). The description of this silencing dynamics echoes that of Vickroy who points out that the "environment of social relations and cultural values can be a source of trauma or a force that silences victims out of denial or guilt [...]. Societies, communities, or families may want to preserve stability or be willing to sacrifice victims for other goals." (2014: 131) According to Butalia, the silenced narratives have primarily included the stories of individuals belonging to politically negligible minorities, marginalized groups and socially unprivileged communities such as women, children, the powerless poor, low-caste people, peasants and also people from relatively tiny religious communities like the Parsees. Along with many other historians, social anthropologists and literary scholars, Butalia argues that their stories and the horrific particulars of the history of India's Independence and Partition are largely missing in the officially sanctioned, factual version that "exists publicly in history books" (Butalia 3). They are discussed mainly among close friends and family members, or, as scholars from diverse fields such as Gyanendra Pandey (2006: 22-3), Alok Bhalla (ed. 1994), Mushirul Hasan (2000), Saros Cowasjee and Kartar S. Duggal (eds. 1995), Arora Neera and R.K. Dhawan (2010), Ravikant and Tarun K. Saint (2001), and Ananya Jahanara Kabir (2005) have pointed out and shown in their publications, reclaimed and reprocessed in fictional texts. Saint and Saint, Hasan, Neera, and other scholars argue along similar lines like Zapf, LaCapra or Vickroy and have stressed the singular capacity and eminent socio-cultural importance of literary texts for the representation of traumatic experiences involving acts of atrocious religious violence that are marginalized or even repressed in the dominant discourses of the public sphere.

> The litterateurs [...] lay aside history and try to interrogate the entire issue differently. They are more concerned with 'what out of it' and 'what after it.' They seek to foreground 'another' history — the history of untold suffering, misery before and after Partition and

[41] I.e. peace between religiously connoted communities within the body politic of India.

> human agonies and traumas which accompanied Partition. (Neera and Dhawan 2010: 13-14)

Most fictions of Partition have a wholly different outlook than the majority of factual accounts, grounded as they generally are "in a sense of loss, terror and uncertainty" and pointing as they do towards "the ambivalence and the conflicting pulls of loyalty which the people experienced, and for which the State had hardly any sympathies" (Saint 2001: 169). While most of those fictional narratives also refer to historical facts and contain some speculations concerning the potential causes of Partition and the question of who were the guilty parties of Partition, they constitute "a repository of localized truths, sought to be evaded and minimized by the dominant discourse on Partition" (Saint and Saint XI).

Fictional texts can, many of them contend, tell the stories side-lined or even silenced in dominant historiographic and political discourses, and they do so in a way that evokes empathy and potentially contributes to both a better understanding of the past and a less violent future. Offering "insights into the nature of individual experience," and "break[ing] the silence in the collective sphere," Partition fictions focus on those aspects which Butalia terms "the 'underside' of the history of Partition" (277). In many ways, Partition fictions set out to tell stories about what Butalia calls "'the 'human dimensions' of this history:" "the feelings, the emotions, the pain and anguish, the trauma, the sense of loss, the silences in which they lay shrouded."[42] Especially literary scholars have remarked that due to their potential of thematizing, representing and discussing precarious topics and events in more affective and perspectively complex ways than, say, academic accounts or newspaper articles, literary texts are of great value for the processes of working through and coming to terms with traumatic experiences. Mushirul Hasan articulates this line of thought with regard to Partition narratives as follows:

> What political debate will never fully do — and the reason we so badly need the literature — is defeat the urge to lay blame, which keeps animosity alive. Only literature truly evokes the suffering of the innocent, whose pain is more universal and ultimately a vehicle of more honest reconciliation than political discourse. (Hasan 2000: 392)

Hasan's assessment is highly applicable to the situation in India where detailed official accounts of victims' experiences tend to be rare and the stories of victims and survivors are hardly ever made heard publicly. Under conditions like this, literary texts have the potential to be a kind of unofficial underground medium where officially tabooed or repressed topics are not only thematized and memorized but discussed extensively. Since Partition, a considerable

[42] Butalia 6; 275.

number of Anglophone Indian and Pakistani novels have tackled the issues of religious alterity and violence and discuss the questions mentioned above, and they have done so in many different ways.

## I.2.i Partition Narratives

> These tarnished rays, this night-smudged light—
> This is not that Dawn for which,
> ravished with freedom,
> we had set out in sheer longing.[43]

Narratives of Partition, most often occurring in the form of the short story and the novel, are works of historical fiction[44] that since the time of India's and Pakistan's independence have been telling stories about ordinary people's lives, sufferings and deaths around the time of British India's partitioning on the basis of religious alterity.[45] Among the earliest and most famous of these narratives are Sadat Hasan Manto's Urdu short story "Toba Tek Singh" (1955) and Kushwant Singh's (English) novel *Train to Pakistan* (1956).[46] While Singh's Anglophone novel was among the first fictional responses to Partition, most short stories and novels about

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[43] Excerpt from the poem *Subh-e-Azadi* ("Dawn of Freedom") by the Urdu Marxist poet Faiz Ahmed Faiz, translated from the Urdu by Agha Shahid Ali, quoted by Pranav Jani. Jani comments on the poem that it "best expresses [...] the sense of tragedy and possibility of 1947 for ordinary people caught in the worldwind [sic!] of historical events: an independence brokered through ethnic cleansing, refugee crisis, communalism, rape, and horrors of partition." http://pranavjani.wordpress.com/2007/08/15/faiz-ahmed-faiz-and-1947/. Accessed July 14th, 2011.

[44] On the genre of historical fiction and its different subgenres see especially Sarah L. Johnson's *Historical Fiction II: A Guide to the Genre* (2009); Jerome de Groot's *The Historical Novel* (2010); and Ansgar Nünning's *Von historischer Fiktion zu historiographischer Metafiktion. Bd. 1. Theorie, Typologie und Poetik des historischen Romans* (1995).

[45] Apart from the introductions to the various anthologies, increasingly published since the mid-1990s, the following books by literary scholars provide good overviews of Partition narratives written so far in the different languages of the Indian sub-continent, including English: Ramesh Mathur and Mahendra Kulasrestha's *Writings on India's Partition* (eds., 1976); Niaz Zaman's *A Divided Legacy* (2000); Ravikant and Tarun K. Saint *Translating Partition* (eds., 2001); Sukrita Paul Kumar's *Narrating Partition: Texts, Interpretations, Ideas* (ed., 2004); Alok Bhalla's *Partition Dialogues: Memories of a Lost Home* (ed., 2007); N.S. Gundur's *Partition and Indian English Fiction* (2007); Jasbir Jain's *Reading Partition, Living Partition* (ed., 2007); Seema Malik's *Partition and Indian English Women Novelists* (2007); Frank Stewart and Sukrita Paul Kumar's *Crossing Over. Partition Literature from India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh* (eds., 2007); Dattatraya Ramchandra More's *The Novels on the Indian Partition* (2008); Neena Arora and R.K. Dhawan's *Partition and Indian Literature* (eds., 2010, 2 vols.); and Rituparna Roy's *South Asian Partition Fiction in English* (2010). Some publications are actually of a mixed 'overview-cum-criticism type'. Apart from assembling several examples of fictional Partition short stories (or excerpts from novels) and providing historical introductions to the genre, they also contain chapters of literary criticism. Among these, *Translating Partition* (2001) and *Crossing Over* (2007) are particularly fine examples.

[46] On the differences between the literary forms of Partition novel and Partition short story see Zaman 2002: 134.

Partition have been written in indigenous Indian languages, especially in Urdu, Hindi, Bengali and Punjabi. One thing is immediately evident from reading (English translations of) these works or discussions of them by South Asian scholars:[47] No matter which language they were written in, the fictional narratives usually represent and thematize the actual violence, the individual pain and loss which millions of people experienced. From early on, many writers from India, West-Pakistan (today's Pakistan) and East Pakistan (today's Bangladesh), who witnessed the events and suffered from them in different ways, have responded to the events in fictional texts. Writing from their specific viewpoints, informed by different aesthetic ideals and political agendas, these writers have produced a sizable collection of highly diverse texts – both as regards their formal aspects and their contents. Among the most cited, reprinted and discussed narratives about Partition are other short stories by Saadat Hasan Manto (Urdu),[48] Intizar Husain (Urdu),[49] Kamleshwar (Urdu),[50] Mohan Rakesh (Urdu),[51] Bhisham Sahni (Hindi),[52] and Kartar Singh Duggal (Punjabi).[53] The most famous novels include *Nahentey Mas*

[47] Regarding the latter, I am especially indebted to Niaz Zaman who in her monograph *A Divided Legacy: The Partition in Selected Novels of India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh* refers to, discusses and thereby provides many insights into literary works on Partition that do not exist in English translation.

[48] The most cited of Manto's short stories are "Toba Tek Singh" (in: Bhalla, ed. 1994; Cowasjee and Duggal, eds. 1995; and Saint and Saint, eds. 2001; Stewart and Kumar, eds. 2007), "Mozel" (in: Bhalla, ed. 1994; and Stewart and Kumar, eds. 2007), "Cold Meat" (*Thanda Gosht*, in: Bhalla, ed. 1994), "Open It" (*Khol Do*, in: Bhalla, ed. 1994) and "The Dog of Tetwal" (in: Saint and Saint, eds. 2001; and Stewart and Kumar, eds. 2007). Zaman remarks that "for the immediate impact of Partition on creative writing one must turn not to Indo-Anglian fiction, but to Urdu writing, particularly the works of Saadat Hasan Manto" (2000: 20). Remarking that the short story and "the grim anecdote" were "Manto's forte," Zaman assesses that "Manto's brilliant and vitriolic pen" succeeded in giving "the starkest and bleakest pictures of Partition. (ibid.). According to Alok Bhalla, Manto was "not interested in offering the kind of banal sermons about the 'glimmer' of humanity and the tenacity of hope, even as people commit the most heinous of crimes." Instead, his stories "suggest that the inhumanity of the partition has so obliterated the moral realm that there is nothing left to retrieve and nothing to hope for; people are now so degraded that they can only act as beasts." (1994: xxxiii-iv) Manto was repeatedly reviled for his way of approaching the subject and accused of unnecessary cruelty, even sensational hyperbole in his descriptions of violence.

[49] E.g. "An Unwritten Epic" (in: Bhalla, ed. 1994), "The City of Sorrow" (in: Bhalla, ed. 1994) and "A Letter from India" (in: Bhalla, ed. 1994).

[50] "How Many Pakistans?" (in: Bhalla, ed. 1994; Cowasjee and Duggal, eds. 1995; Hasan, ed. 1995; Saint and Saint, eds. 2001; and Stewart and Kumar, eds. 2007)

[51] E.g. "The Owner of Rubble" (in: Cowasjee and Duggal, eds. 1995; Hasan, ed. 1995; and Stewart and Kumar, eds. 2007), and "The Claim" (in: Bhalla, ed. 1994; Stewart and Kumar, eds. 2007).

[52] E.g. "Pali" (in: Bhalla, ed. 1994; Cowasjee and Duggal, eds. 1995; Saint and Saint, eds. 2001; Stewart and Kumar, eds. 2007) and "The Train has Reached Amritsar" (in: Bhalla, ed. 1994; Hasan, ed. 1995; and Stewart and Kumar, eds. 2007).

[53] E.g. "Kulsum" (in: Bhalla, ed. 1994; Cowasjee and Duggal, eds. 1995; Duggal 2007), and "Pakistan Zindabad" (in: Cowasjee and Duggal, eds. 1995; and Duggal 2007).

(1979; Punjabi) by Kartar Singh Duggal, *Basti* (1979; Urdu) by Intizar Husain, *Lajja* (1993; Bengali) by Taslima Nasreen, *Pinjar* (1950; Punjabi) by Amrita Pritam, *Adha Gaon* (1966; Hindi) by Masoom Rahi Reza and *Tamas* (1974; Hindi) by Bisham Sahni. As regards poetry, the most-cited and well-known poems are by Faiz Ahmad Faiz (Urdu) and Makhdoom Mohiuddin (Urdu). Many scholars, among them Mushirul Hasan and Niaz Zaman, have remarked that it was especially the short story that "emerged as one of the important forms of expression" dealing with the events of Partition: "The short story with its focus on the individual protagonist, from the ranks of the ordinary, was the vehicle through which the 'small' destinies of those spared by the 'big' events of history, could be portrayed" (Hasan, ed. 1995: 9).

In *A Divided Legacy* (2000), a comparative literary discussion of Partition novels from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, Niaz Zaman carves out the relevance of the different geographical regions and cultural background from where the individual narratives originated. Summing up her findings, Zaman asserts that "writings on Partition [...] cannot be unconscious of politics, of questions of nationhood, and identity" and that "the Indianness of writers, the Pakistani or Bengali identity of writers, is manifest in their writings, explicitly or implicitly."[54] Many scholars have pointed out another important difference in the aesthetics of Partition narratives which they assert results from the different attitudes of the respective authors both as regards Partition and the meaning or purpose of their works. On the one hand, they name the works of writers belonging to the aesthetic school of the "Progressives Writers Association," which was "founded by Sajjad Zaheer and Mulk Raj Anand" (Hasan 1995: 86) and "had been a dominant force on the Indian scene since the Thirties" (Cowasjee and Duggal 1995: xiii). The writers of the movement were "anti-imperialistic and left-oriented, and sought to inspire people through their

[54] Zaman 2000: 335. One of Zaman's main results is that East Pakistani (today's Bangladeshi) narratives were much less concerned with the violence and loss of Partition than narratives from West Pakistan (today's Pakistan) and India, tending "to elide violence, to keep it in the background, or dismiss it as an aberration." (333) Instead, Zaman points out, they focus mainly on the project of nation-building that lay ahead. For the major differences between Partition narratives from the Punjab (the region located in today's Pakistan and North-west India) on the one hand and Bengal (the region located in today's Bangladesh and North-east India) on the other hand see Namaz pp. 13-17, 143, 167 and 180. An element closely linked to that is the centrality which especially East Pakistani (Bangladeshi) narratives assigned to the stress on the cultural and linguistic discreteness and independence of the Bengali part of Pakistan. Representations of melancholia, feelings of nostalgia and violence were elided and actually submerged in "the creation of a new identity: a Muslim Bengali Pakistani." (333) An aspect that Zaman finds generally distinguishes West Pakistani (Pakistani) narratives from those of Indian and Bangladeshi writers is that they contain a favourable image of the statesman Jinnah and usually cast the British as inadequately prejudiced against Jinnah and Pakistan: "Reappraising the character of Jinnah and attempting to improve this image, [Pakistani writers like Bapsi Sidhwa] stress that the British supported the Indians and were deliberately unfair to both Pakistan and Jinnah." (Zaman 2000: 260)

writings advocating equality and attacking social injustice and backwardness."[55] Disillusioned and incapable of finding reasons for the violence they witnessed during Partition, most Progressives used their writings to give vent to their disappointment and frustration. Many of them "concentrated solely on painting elaborate scenes of violence in the hope of conveying their sense of disgust," while, at the same time, "they consciously avoided taking sides and put the blame equally on both warring factions" (Cowasjee and Duggal 1995: xiii). Among the most well-known Progressives today are Munshi Premchand (1880-1963, literary language: Hindi), Saadat Hasan Manto (1912-55; literary language: Urdu), Bhisham Sahni (1915-2003; literary language: Hindi), Amrita Pritam (1919-2005; literary language: Punjabi), Faiz Ahmad Faiz (1912-85; literary language: Urdu) and Makhdoom Mohiuddin (1908-69; literary language: Urdu). On the other hand, Partition narratives of later writers have been noted to concentrate more on long-term character developments, the nostalgia regarding a lost way of life and co-existence and other aspects which they expected to enable a better understanding of the events and the aftermath, the behaviour of those who became involved in them and a coming to terms with the present day situation (see Saint and Saint 2001: XVIII-XX).

Irrespective of the narratives' languages of composition — no matter if they were written in Urdu, Hindi, Punjabi, Bengali or other languages like English, for example — the historical moments of their conception and the aesthetic ideals or political attitudes of their writers, there exists a corpus of motifs, images and plot elements which tend to recur in Partition narratives. Niaz Zaman provides a list of what she terms "the necessary ingredients of the Partition novel" and claims that it comprises "the Hindu-Muslim unity, often depicted in terms of a Hindu-Muslim romance; the concern with language; a portrait of the historical figures connected with the Partition and/or independence of India; large-scale massacres and rapes or humiliations of women" (191).

This short list is far from complete. Other recurrent plot elements and important images in fictional texts include those of changed cityscapes and the neglected condition of abandoned houses; the treks and camps of refugees; the train massacre; the train journey as symbol for departure, killings, loss and Partition in general (especially in West and North Indian narratives); the tale of the peaceful, harmonious co-existence of Hindus/Sikhs and Muslims before Partition, close ties between the two communities (often friendships between families) and respectful acknowledgement of the traditions and ways of the other communities; the

[55] http://pwa.sapfonline.org/. Accessed August 29, 2011.

theme of growing differences between Hindus and Muslims; the theme of refugees' and migrants' feeling of non-belonging both in the country left behind and the new 'home' country; the contrasting of rural and urban settings in terms of the manner of Hindu-Muslim co-existence and the impact Partition thereon; the image of evil, avaricious Hindu money-lenders and poor Muslim as well as Hindu debtors; the overt indictment of the dealings of Indian politicians and British colonizers; the equal affectedness by violence of all communities; the perpetration of violence by members of all communities; and the laying of blame for atrocities on anonymous "*goondas*", outsiders and strangers.[56]

Obviously, not all of the 'standard ingredients' and recurrent motifs occur in all short stories and novels. What is interesting, however, is the recurrence of many of these motifs across language and geographical borders. This becomes especially clear in view of what have become two of the most famous motifs — i.e. the departing train and the train massacre, which have acquired the status of symbols of Partition today. The novel that first introduced these as central motives in a Partition narrative — *Train to Pakistan* by Kushwant Singh — was not written in any of the indigenous languages, however. It was written in English.

[56] For an in-depth discussion of different recurrent themes and prevalent motifs see Zaman 2000.

## I.2.ii Fictions of Partition in English and in English Translation[57]

> Writers, unless they chose like Raja Rao to completely ignore the Partition, never stopped writing about it.[58]

For an Anglophone readership in and outside India, the most famous, well-nigh prototypical, novel on Partition is Singh's *Train to Pakistan* (1954) which was originally written in English. As the list of Hindi, Urdu, Punjabi and Bengali literary texts illustrates, *Train to Pakistan* was neither the first nor has it remained the only narrative that was written about the events. However, irrespective of the literary genre – be that the short story, the novel, poetry or drama – *Train to Pakistan* was among the earliest literary responses and is widely considered one of the

[57] If one discusses novels written in English by Indian and Pakistani authors, the question if these are *truly* Indian or Pakistani novels is never far away. Especially with regard to Anglophone Indian novels the issue of authenticity and 'Indianness' has been raised. K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar for example claims that the Indian writer who chooses English as his or her means of literary expression is "a confused wanderer between the two worlds" of India and Europe (29), while R. S. Pathak asserts that "the Indo-English novelist behaves like a literary outcast" (1982: 6). According to Pathak, 'the' Indo-English writer in general is, due to his language choice, "betraying his roots", and as a result, "Indo-English novels reveal, on the whole, an intellectual anguish and a confusion of values emanating from their writers' Indo-European duality" (ibid.). Conversely, many writers and critics, including for example Salman Rushdie, have highlighted the great advantage of English as a trans-Indian language, which crosses all linguistic boundaries within India and thus is spoken and understood across all of India – in contrast to the many regional languages. The article "English in the Indian Subcontinent" on the British Library's website point out that "English remains at the heart of Indian society" and describes its considerable relevance in India: "It is widely used in the media, in Higher Education and government and therefore remains a common means of communication, both among the ruling classes, and between speakers of mutually unintelligible languages. According to recent surveys, approximately 4% of the Indian population use English. That figure might seem insignificant, but out of the total population this represents 35 million speakers – the largest English-speaking community outside the USA and the UK. In addition there are speakers of English in other parts of South Asia, such as Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, where English plays a similar role. English is virtually a mother tongue for many educated South Asians" (http://www.bl.uk/learning/langlit/sounds/case-studies/minority-ethnic/asian/; accessed 25-12-2015). So despite not being an indigenous Indian language and lacking the official status of a national language, English has been referred to as "the de facto national language of India" (http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/17/world/asia/17iht-letter17.html?_r=0; accessed 25-12-2015).

Quite a few voices point to the colonial implications of the status of English as an Indian lingua franca. While it enables communication across linguistic boundaries for the privileged few who master it, the writer Aatish Taseer claims, "English re-enacts the colonial relationship, placing certain Indians in a position the British once occupied" (http://www.nytimes.com/2015/03/22/opinion/sunday/how-english-ruined-indian-literature.html; accessed 25-12-2015). According to Taseer, English is a powerful divisive force in Indian society because "it has created a linguistic line as unbreachable as the color line once was in the United States" (ibid.).

[58] Zaman 2000: 186.

classics of Partition fiction today.[59] A main reason for the novel's status is that it prominently contains what has by now become an essential element in most Partition fiction: the "train massacre — which, with Manto and Singh, becomes the symbol of the violence attending Partition" (Zaman 2000: 23).

Singh's novel is set in the fictitious small village Mano Majra with a mixed Sikh und Muslim population, which is situated close to an arterial national railway track. As Partition draws near, the villagers witness the increasing disruption of the scheduled train movements and the frequent arrival of ghost trains full of dead bodies that are then burned on huge pyres. After Partition, Mano Majra happens to end up on Indian soil, and despite age-old bonds of family and friendship, the issue of religious difference becomes increasingly problematic. Mutual distrust poisons the every-day life of the community und eventually the Muslim inhabitants are forced to leave their homes and board a train heading for Pakistan. In the end, the Muslim refugees very narrowly escape the notorious fate of many other refugees in the same situation whose train across the newly created border was stopped by a blood-thirsty mob that mutilated and killed those inside.

Apart from the symbol of the train massacre, Singh's novel contains other motifs and plot elements that until today recur in Partition narratives across both language and national boundaries. These include among others the image of the idyllic, peaceful co-existence of Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims in a rural setting before Partition, the romance across communal boundaries (in *Train to Pakistan* between a Muslim girl and a Sikh man), the growing self-consciousness and mistrust between members of the different communities as Partition draws near, the delinquency of the British officials and politicians in general in face of the rampant violence, the complete deterioration of inter-communal relations at Partition and the eventual expulsion of one community from the village and their eventual deportation to 'their own country' (in *Train to Pakistan* it is the Muslims because the village ends up in India).

With the exception of Singh's novel it was difficult for an English-speaking readership for more than three decades after Partition to get hold of literary texts dealing with that historical phase. On the one hand, relatively few Partition narratives were actually published. On the

[59] There exists an ever-growing corpus of publications on Singh's novel. Gabriele Rippl's article "'Inszenierung von Differenz: Interreligiöse Konflikte im englischsprachigen indischen Gegenwartsroman" (2010), apart from being one of the most recent publications, is of special interest to this thesis because it establishes a conceptual link between the Partition novel *Train to Pakistan* and contemporary novels on communal violence in India and interprets them in the same analytical frame.

other hand, since these few published narratives, mostly short stories, were almost exclusively composed in one of the main traditional literary Indian languages like Bengali, Urdu, Hindi or Punjabi, they were hardly accessible to Anglophone readers. This situation changed drastically in the mid-1990s, well timed for the 50th anniversary of both Independence and Partition. Since then, many classical stories originally written in one of the traditional literary Indian languages have increasingly been translated into English and are available outside of South Asia.[60]

Many Partition stories, especially the shorter pieces and excerpts from novels, have been published in anthologies und thus made accessible to a considerably wider readership, nationally as well as internationally speaking. These publications usually comprise a great variety of fictional narratives such as short stories, poetry, excerpts from novels and also non-fictional writings. One of the most comprehensive anthologies compiling sixty-one translated items from different Indian languages is the three-volume *Stories about the Partition of India* edited by Alok Bhalla in 1994. Other anthologies, both also published by major New Delhi publishers in 1995 are the two-volume *India Partitioned: The Other Face of Freedom* edited by Mushirul Hasan containing both fictional and non-fictional texts and *Orphans of the Storm: Stories on Partition of India* edited by Saros Cowasjee and K.S. Duggal.[61] Furthermore, apart from producing translations of existing stories, since the early 1980s more and more South Asian authors have chosen to compose new fictional narratives, especially novels, focusing on the events accompanying Partition and Independence and employing the English language as their medium of expression. By now, as literary scholars like Robert Ross and Niaz Zaman have pointed out, "the events of Partition have started to form a myth from which [Indo-Anglian]

[60] Among the most notable English translations of novels are Intizar Husain's Urdu novel *Basti* (1979; transl. by Alok Bhalla and Vishwamitter Adil [2002]) and Taslima Nasreen's Bengali novel *Lajja* (1993; transl. into English by Tutul Gupta [*Shame*, 1994]), Amrita Pritam's Punjabi novel *Pinjar* (1950; transl. by Kushwant Singh [*The Skeleton*, 1987]) and Masoom Rahi Reza's Hindi novel *Adha Gaon* (1966, transl. from Hindi by Gillian Wright [*The Feuding Families of Village Gangauli*, 1994]) and Bhisham Sahni's Hindi novel *Tamas* (1974; transl. into English by the author [1988], also made into a film).

[61] For a detailed review of these three anthologies see: Jason Francisco's "In the Heat of Fratricide. The Literature of India's Partition Burning Freshly (A Review Article)" (1996). Other anthologies of Partition narratives — fictional and non-fictional — translated from Bengali, Hindi, Punjabi or Urdu into English include the following: Intizar Husain's compilation of short stories *A Chronicle of the Peacocks. Stories of Partition, Exile and Lost Memories* (ed. 2002); Niaz Zaman's compilation of narratives by various Bengali writers *Under the Krishnachura. Fifty Years of Bangladeshi Writing* (ed. 2003); Kartar Singh Duggal's selection short stories *Abducted Not and other Stories of Partition Holocaust* (2007); several collections of witness accounts and memoirs such as Urvashi Butalia's *The Other Side of Silence: Voices from the Partition of India* (1998); Alok Bhalla's *Partition Dialogues: Memories of a Lost Home* (ed. 2007) and Nandi Bhatia and Anjali Gera Roy's *Partitioned Lives: Narratives of Home, Displacement, and Resettlement* (eds. 2008).

novelists draw" (Zaman 2000: 235). They take advantage of the fact that English — unlike Bengali, Hindi, Punjabi, Urdu and other regional languages — is not restricted to any one specific region in India. It reaches readers not only outside India but also from all over India and has therefore come to be considered the most 'Indian' language cutting across state borders and regional Indian language boundaries, furthering mutual understanding between different communities.[62]

> English, after two hundred years of British rule, was the only link language not only with the erstwhile masters but also with the other parts of the India Union which, no longer united against a common enemy, was split into several states, each with its own regional language. [...] the need to understand what had happened, to come to terms with the forces that had rent the land and, [...] with private demons [...], led these writers, [...] to explain what happened when India gained independence but also fell apart. (Zaman 25)

The urge of writers to explain and understand the past seems to have been — and seems still to be — great indeed, because, as Zaman notes, the "partition of the sub-continent is an event that almost every writer in English has focused on in at least one novel" (2000: 237). While there are relatively few internationally acclaimed examples — notably Chaman Nahal's *Azadi* (1975), Attia Hosain's *Sunlight on a Broken Column* (1961), Manohar Malgonkar's *A Bend in the Ganges* (1964), Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1980), Anita Desai's *Clear Light of Day* (1980), Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines* (1988) and Bapsi Sidhwa's *Cracking India* (orig. publ. as *Ice-Candy Man* 1989) — many more narratives have been written and keep being published.[63] The topic unabatedly attracts Bangladeshi, Indian and Pakistani fiction and non-fiction authors writing in English.

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[62] This point has been made by a great number of Indian, Pakistani and Bengali literary scholars, literary critics and writers. Among the most famous authors who are champions of the cause of English as indigenous Indian literary language are Salman Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh, Vikram Seth and Anita Desai.

[63] Other English novels focusing on or extensively referring to Partition include *Shame* (1983) by Salman Rushdie, *The Pakistani Bride* (1983) by Pakistani writer Bapsi Sidhwa, *The Great Indian Novel* (1990) by Indian author Shashi Tharoor, *Season of the Rainbirds* (1993) by Pakistani writer Nadeem Aslam, *Looking Through Glass* (1995) by Indian writer Mukul Kesavan, *Can You Hear the Nightbird Call* (2006) by Indian-Canadian writer Anita Rau Badami, *What the Body Remembers* (1999) by Indian-Canadian writer Shauna Singh Baldwin, *Burnt Shadows* (2006) by Pakistani writer Kamila Shamsie, *The Long Walk Home* by Indian writer Manreet Sodhi Someshwar (2009). The growing corpus of non-fictional, autobiographical texts includes the book *Tales of Two Cities* (2008) containing the memoires of the Indian journalist Kuldip Nayar ("From Sialkot to Delhi") and the Pakistani journalist and critic Asif Noorani ("From Bombay to Karachi") and the memoir *Train to India. Memories of Another Bengal* by Bengali writer Maloy Krishna Dhar (2009).

## I.2.iii Anglophone Fictions of Religious Alterity and Violence

In a similar vein, communalism, communal violence and religious fanaticism have become a salient element in many contemporary Anglophone Indian novels and other literary texts.[64] Especially since the early 21st century, many novels and other literary texts have been published which refer to, thematize, represent and discuss instances of communal violence and religious fanaticism. Some refer to historical instances while others portray fictional ones, in some texts instances of communal violence and religious fanaticism are at the very heart of the narrative, in other texts they are only referred to as a narrative side-line complementing the main narrative. Apart from the novel and the short story, the genre of drama has also been used for discussing communalism and communal violence on a fictional level. An excellent example of this is Mahesh Dattani's play "Final Solutions" (2001), which is set partly in the time of Partition, partly in present day India, combining and setting against each other the memories and experiences of different generations. In a visual culture like India it goes without saying that cinema and film are likely to be of great importance when it comes to actually stimulate and enliven the public and wide-ranging discussion of these socio-culturally explosive topics. Since the mid-seventies, quite a few films dealing with Partition and instances of communal violence have been produced, some of them based on novels.[65]

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[64] Curiously, there exist hardly any studies which discuss novels and other literary forms of expression on communalism and communal violence. The great majority of analyses of these texts do not make a link to the overarching theme of communalism and communal violence as a theme or motif in contemporary literature. Among the few exceptions are Morey and Tickell's *Alternative Indias. Writing, Nation and Communalism* (eds. 2005); Tarun K. Saint's *Bruised Memories. Communal Violence and the Writer* (ed. 2002); Gabriele Rippl's "Erzählte Fotos. Foto-Text-Beziehungen in Raj Kamal Jhas Roman *Fireproof* (2006)" (2008); Annie Cottier's "Haunted Whispers from the Footnotes: Life Writing in Raj Kamal Jha's *Fireproof*" (2013) and Nora Anna Escherle's "Meddling with Memory — Negating Grand Narratives" (2013).

[65] Examples of films on Partition and communal violence include (in chronological order): *Garm Hawa* (1975, dir. M. S. Sathyu) based on a short story on Partition written by Ismat Chugtai, *Gandhi* (1983, dir. Richard Attenborough) which included a portrayal of the Direct Action Day and Partition riots, *Tamas* (1986, dir. Govind Nihalani) based on the novel of the same title by Bhisham Sahni, *Bombay* (1995, dir. Mani Ratnam) centred on the Bombay riots December 1992-January 1993, *Maachis* (1996, dir. Gulzar) about Punjab terrorism, *Train to Pakistan* (1998, dir. Pamela Rooks) based on Singh's novel, *Earth* (1998, dir. Deepa Metha) based on Sidhwa's novel *Cracking India* (1989), *Fiza* (2000, dir. Khalid Mohammed) set during the Bombay riots 1992-3, *Hey Ram* (2000, dir. Kamal Haasan) featuring a semi-fictional plot centring around the Partition of India and Ghandi's assassination, *Mr. and Mrs. Iyer* (2002, dir. Aparna Sen) about personal relationships during Hindu-Muslim riots in India, *Hawayein* (2003, dir. Ammtoje Mann) about the 1984 anti-Sikh riots, *Pinjar* (2003, dir. Chandra Prakash Dwivedi) based on Amrita Pritam's novel of the same title, *Black Friday* (2004, dir. Anurag Kashyap) on the 1993 serial bomb blasts in Mumbai, *Final Solution* (2004, dir. Rakesh Sharma), a documentary about the 2002 Gujarat violence banned in India, *Amu* (2005, dir. Shonali Bose) about a

In general, the many occurrences and forms of communal violence and religious fanaticism are increasingly reflected in a multitude of fictional narratives in books and film featuring different aesthetic approaches and strategies. The topic of communalism and communal violence has led to an especially large and ever-growing corpus of fictional texts. Apart from the two novels *Riot* (2001) by Shashi Tharoor and *Fireproof* (2006) by Raj Kamal Jha discussed in detail in this thesis, the group of communalism narratives include the following texts: Githa Hariharan's novel *In Times of Siege* (2003), Vikram Chandra's novel *Sacred Games* (2006), Mahesh Dattani's play "Final Solutions" (first published in a collection of plays in 2000), Kiran Nagarkar's novel *Ravan and Eddie* (1994), Meher Pestonji's novel *Pervez* (2003), Altaf Tyrewala's novel *No God In Sight* (2006), Kiran Desai's novel *The Inheritance of Loss* (2006) and M.G. Vassanji's novel *The Assassin's Song* (2007).[66] Although it is not as voluminous, the group of fictional texts thematizing religious fanaticism, i.e. narratives about individuals who resort to violence on a large scale in the name of religion, has also come to comprise a sizable number of novels, which differ considerably in the way they approach their topic. Among the most widely known novels on religious fanatics are Anita Rau Badami's *Can You Hear the Nightbird Call* (2006), Vikram Chandra's *Sacred Games* (2006), Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007), Kiran Nagarkar's *God's Little Soldier* (2006) and Salman Rushdie's *Shalimar the Clown* (2005), *The Satanic Verses* (1989) and *Shame* (1983) and Kamila Shamsie's *Burnt Shadows* (2008).

## I.3 State of Research, Research Questions and Hypothesis, Method

### I.3.i State of Research

In contrast to the many examples of Anglophone literary fiction by Indian and Pakistani writers on the topic of religion and violence, specifically Partition and communal violence, the number of studies about this group of literary texts is very small. By far the most research has been done on the genre of the Partition novel and ranges from diverse articles on individual novels and writers to annotated anthologies and whole monographs. Apart from the introductions to the various anthologies increasingly published since the mid-1990s, the following books by literary scholars provide especially good overviews of and introductions to Partition narratives written so far in the different languages of the Indian sub-continent, including English: Niaz Zaman's *A*

girl orphaned during the 1984 anti-Sikh riots, *Parzania* (2007, dir. Rahul Dholakia) about the riots in Gujarat in 2002, and *Firaaq* (2008, dir. Nandita Das) set in the aftermath of the 2002 Gujarat riots.

[66] Further examples of communalism narratives by different contemporary writers, including short stories, poems and other forms of literary expression, are assembled in *Bruised Memories. Communal Violence and the Writer* (2002), a small anthology edited by Tarun K. Saint.

*Divided Legacy* (2000) looks at a great variety of novels from Pakistan Bangladesh and India written in English and languages such as Urdu, Bengali, Hindi and Punjabi. Ravikant and Tarun K. Saint's *Translating Partition* (eds., 2001) not only contains several famous Partition short stories but also a good introduction to the genre and several secondary articles. The same applies to Sukrita Paul Kumar's *Narrating Partition: Texts, Interpretations, Ideas* (ed., 2004) and Stewart and Sukrita Paul Kumar's *Crossing Over. Partition Literature from India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh* (eds., 2007). Seema Malik's *Partition and Indian English Women Novelists* (2007) provides a decidedly female angle on the topic. Both Arora Neera and R.K. Dhawan's *Partition and Indian Literature* (eds., 2010, 2 vols.) and Jasbir Jain's *Reading Partition, Living Partition* (ed., 2007) contain a rich selection of articles on different aspects and forms of Partition narratives. When it comes to the discussion of contemporary Anglophone 'communalism novels,' however, there are hardly any studies to be found. Among the few exceptions are Tarun K. Saint's small, shortly prefaced anthology *Bruised Memories. Communalism and the Writer* (ed. 2002), Ismat Chughtai's article "Communal Violence and Literature" (1987) and Peter Morey and Alex Tickell's *Alternative Indias* (2005), which includes several articles on different novels. Most of the novels discussed in the book's articles are Partition novels, however, that do not represent contemporary processes of 'hostile Othering' on the basis of religion. Also, no study up to date has analysed narratives of Partition and communalism in regard to how they discuss the general question of the relation between religion and violence beyond the specific historical context. As a consequence, this study fills a gap in the field of literary research on the fictional representation of the process of hostile Othering on the basis of religious alterity and the negotiation in novels of the relation between religious alterity and violence both within and beyond the specific historical context.

### I.3.ii Research Questions and Hypothesis

Drawing on the debates about the question of religion's relation to violence in different fields and conscientiously factoring in the specific historical contexts that the novels refer to and were written in, this study aims at identifying the ways in which selected examples of literary fiction represent, respond to and discuss historical instances of religious violence and how they negotiate the relation between religion and the violence they describe. This thesis' overarching question is how these novels, representing those violent events on a fictional level, position themselves regarding the relation between religion, religious alterity, hostile Othering and violence. Looking for answers to that principal question necessarily triggers further interrelated

questions. These include, but are not limited to, the following ones: What role — if any — do they assign religion and religious identity in India's history of violence between religious communities? Are they projecting any alternative scenario to this history of violence between religious communities, and if so, what kind of scenario, and how do they project it? The approach to answering my principal question importantly involves looking at the ways in which these fictional texts refer to and include contemporary public discourses on the topic of religion's relation to violence in India. In this respect, I am especially interested in literary representations and negotiations of the complex dynamics of marginalization, repression or silencing of memories of traumatizing events in dominant discourses in the public domain. My central hypothesis is that by way of narrating specific instances of religiously connoted violence, the novels scrutinize and highlight processes of hostile Othering on the basis of religious alterity and thereby bring to the fore its consequences both for the individuals directly involved and society as a whole. I contend that these novels deplore the status of religious alterity as singular category of perceiving the cultural 'Other' and, by virtue of providing a multifaceted, complex image of India's and Pakistan's inhabitants, argue for a conceptual pluralization of identities and illustrate the advantages of perceiving others not as same but instead as diversely different.

I assume that the specific ways in which these texts fictionally represent historical instances of religious violence gives valuable clues regarding two aspects: Firstly, I expect to find out if and how these novels conceptualize the events they represent as instances of religious violence. Secondly, I expect to gain insights into their positions on the relation between religion and violence in general. I furthermore anticipate that looking for clues regarding these two aspects will involve the analysis of how these novels represent and refer to existing discourses on these topics within the public sphere.

### I.3.iii Text Selection

The text corpus of my dissertation comprises the following contemporary novels: Bapsi Sidhwa's *Cracking India* (1991), Shashi Tharoor's *Riot* (2001), Raj Kamal Jha's *Fireproof* (2006) and Salman Rushdie's *Shalimar the Clown* (2005). In all of these novels, processes of hostile Othering on the basis of religion and different forms of religious violence are of central importance on the story and plot levels. Apart from sheer considerations of the texts' central topic, however, other aspects played an equally important role in the text selection. The most evident one was my chosen geographical and cultural focus on India and Pakistan. I decided that this focus affected not only the content level of the potentially selected texts but also the

origins of their authors. By choosing only texts by authors of Indian and Pakistani origin I hoped to have access to authentic insider views of events and discourses surrounding these events, being able to take advantage of the cultural rootedness of these writers. Furthermore, the novels were selected in order to give consideration to the long-term historical dimensions of the topic of religious alterity and violence within the specific context of India and Pakistan and the diversity of aesthetic approaches that have been employed to respond to them. The selection of *Cracking India*, *Riot*, *Fireproof* and *Shalimar the Clown* serves both to cover the historical period since Partition up to the present day and to bear witness to the existing formal and stylistic variety featured in contemporary novels dealing with different aspects of the topic.

A major reason for the present text selection is that I am particularly interested in novels in which historical or contemporary incidents of religious violence are of essential importance both for their characters and the narratives as a whole. The plots of all selected novels are set in the historical past or are embedded within contemporary history: Partition 1947/48 (*Cracking India*), the riots accompanying the Ram Janmabhumi campaign in the late 1980s and early 1990s (*Riot*), the anti-Muslim pogrom in Gujarat 2002 (*Fireproof*), and the Kashmir conflict (*Shalimar the Clown*). The narratives are easily recognizable as fictional representations of actual historical or contemporary events. They are pervaded by references to actual historical or contemporary persons and documents and are interfused with details that are characteristic of a certain historical, social and cultural context (references may vary greatly in their scope and degree of historicity). In line with these aspects, all selected novels were expected to discuss the issue of religious alterity and violence by responding to and commenting on both the specific historical events and on the dominant discourses surrounding these events within the specific historical settings and at the time the novels were written.

A further important reason for the selection of all novels was that they were published after the rise to power of Hindu-nationalism in India's political arena in the 1980s. As outlined in chapter III, the Hindu-nationalists took advantage of generally existing but largely dormant ways of thinking along the lines of religious alterity in order to maximize the number of their followers and to secure their access to political power. The subsequent omnipresence of communal discourse and its increasing implementation as a 'natural' way of thinking about India's citizens in terms of their religious alterities have resulted in the significant increase of tensions and violent clashes between religious communities in India. The novels analysed in this thesis were all written in and refer to the context of communalism's omnipresence in

public discourse as well as ordinary Indian people's ways of thinking and of the increasingly frequent as well as severe escalations of religiously connoted violence.

Being largely indebted to the literary genres of the Bildungsroman and the revisionist historical novel, *Cracking India* is a realist style account of the usually silenced or side-lined stories of atrocious violence during Partition as perceived by the Parsi girl Lenny Sethi in Lahore narrated in retrospect by her adult self. *Riot* presents itself as a confusing tessellation of mutually complementing and also sometimes contradicting 'documents' such as excerpts from letters, diaries and interview transcripts about a murder of a US American woman during a riot in a fictitious North Indian town. Constituting a blend of a documentary novel and a detective story, *Riot* discusses the dynamics and conditions of the phenomenon of the communal riot with reference to the historical context of the Ram Janmabhoomi temple campaign in the 1980s. Highly different from *Riot* aesthetically, *Fireproof* is an intermedial crime novel that mixes journalistic matter-of-fact style and magical realist elements to tell the off-the-record, sidelined details of the history of the anti-Muslim pogrom in Gujarat 2002.

Irrespective of their formal and stylistic peculiarities, both *Riot* and *Fireproof* refer explicitly or in a general way to recent historical, contemporary events that initiated, involved, or were related to, instances of communal violence. In analogy to the novels on Partition, which are referred to as Partition novels, I refer to *Riot* and *Fireproof* and similar novels as 'communalism novels' from now on. All communalism novels represent and discuss grievances and violence related to the politics of religious alterity in present day India. At the same time, most of them consciously establish a link to their close relatives, the Partition novels, by including references to the events of Partition to varying degrees and employing motifs, images and plot elements that pervade Partition narratives.

The last novel discussed in this thesis is the revisionist historical novel *Shalimar the Clown*.[67] With a plot spanning over 30 years the narrative retraces the origins and the evolvement over

[67] Both journalists and literary scholars have predominantly discussed *Shalimar the Clown* as Rushdie's novelistic response to the terrorist attacks of 9-11 and categorized it as 'fictional biography of a terrorist.' Apart from being a highly reductionist, and to certain extent also a misleading reading of the novel, this approach ignores the fact that *Shalimar the Clown* has three other main characters who are not terrorists at all: Boonyi (his wife), Max (Boonyi's lover) and Kashmira aka India (Boonyi and Max's daughter). Also, while Rushdie's novel tells the story of a male individual who for diverse reasons falls for religious fanaticism and turns to violence, the eponymous hero's principal motive for becoming a mujahedin has nothing to do with religious beliefs. He only enters the transnationally operating network of Islamist terrorists in the hope that his assignments will eventually enable him to take revenge on the US-American ex-lover of his wife.

time of what has come to be called the Kashmir conflict. Focussing on a fictional small village where the Kashmiriyat-"myth" (cf. Malik) of the harmonious co-existence of Kashmiri Hindus and Muslims is reality, the novel goes on to render the growing tensions between the religious communities and their eventual escalation into violence. *Shalimar the Clown* underlines the interrelatedness and interchangeability of local and global dimensions, showing the Kashmir conflict's repercussions both on the individual and interpersonal level as well as in the international domain.

### I.3.iv Method and Structure

Following this introduction, chapters II and III provide both the theoretical basis and the historical and socio-political context for the literary analyses. It begins by introducing and contextualizing the theoretical terms of religion, violence, religious alterity and hostile 'Othering,' all of which play an important role in my literary analyses. As was already pointed out, both religion and violence are terms that are notoriously difficult to define and the relation between religion and violence is a highly contested one. So it is of great importance to introduce my definitions of those terms and to outline carefully how I intend to apply them in my analyses. This task includes the endeavor of taking a closer look at the relation between religion and violence, carving out a selection of those aspects of religion that have commonly been associated with violence or assumed to trigger violence. One of the best-known examples of these aspects is that of the absolute truth claim. This selection of religion's 'evil' aspects later constitutes the basis for the analyses of the novels' discussion of religious violence. In addition to the theoretical discussion of terms, chapter III provides essential historical and socio-cultural context of the topics of religion, religious alterity and violence in India. This context is of great importance because all of the novels under discussion in this thesis represent and respond in complex ways to these specific historical and contemporary backgrounds and the ways in which they do so is of utmost relevance in all analyses.

Chapters IV.1, IV.2, IV.3 and IV.4 contain the textual analyses of the four novels *Cracking India* by Bapsi Sidhwa (1991), *Riot* by Shashi Tharoor (2001), *Fireproof* by Raj Kamal Jha (2006) and *Shalimar the Clown* by Salman Rushdie (2005). In order to answer my research question of how the novels position themselves with regard to the relation of religion and violence in general, all analyses assign a major role to the ways in which the novels represent specific historical and contemporary instances of religious violence in India and Pakistan, how they refer to and discuss them. The peculiarities of these representations, both in terms of their

similarities to and deviations from official accounts play an important role in their interpretation. As was pointed out earlier, however, (aesthetic) form on the one hand and content and function on the other hand are inseparably connected. Consequently, the aesthetic aspects of the narratives are of equal importance in my analyses as the novels' content. In all analyses, great attention will be paid to the questions of genre because the choice of genre entails a specific emplotment of narrative elements, endowing them with specific roles that might be in line with or at odds with non-fictional accounts of the same events. A further aspect that will play a major role in all analyses is the perspectival structure of the narrative. This focus ties in with my interest in the potential of fictional texts of providing unusual, unknown or even impossible perspectives on events, thereby supplementing or undermining official accounts.

Apart from the two aspects of genre and perspectival structure, which will be important in all analyses, further aspects will be included in the analyses depending on the specific formal, structural and stylistic features of the novels in question. While a thorough analysis of *Cracking India* and *Shalimar the Clown* necessitates a close look at the form and function of their employment of allegories, that of *Fireproof* requires taking into account the novel's use of photographs and other intermedial features. By paying due respect to the literary specificities of all novels in my analyses and link these up with their representations of instances of religious violence, I hope to be able to find answers my research question. This answer will be outlined in detail in the concluding chapter V by summarizing the most relevant results from the analyses and furthermore projects potential areas of further research.

### I.3.v Declaration of Refraining from Instrumentalism

Although the temptation is strong and many before have given in to it, I will try not to succumb to what Wolfgang Iser denounces as an approach to literature that "reduces it to the status of a document" (13) and what Attridge calls "literary instrumentalism" (6). I agree with Iser's criticism of those who view and use literature as "a mirror reflection of society" and make it "into a divining rod for the hidden dimension of social organizations and relationships" (13). I want to refrain from diminishing the literary texts in my study, using them "as a means to a predetermined end," approaching them "with the hope or the assumption that [they] can be instrumental in furthering an existing project, and responding to [them] in such a way as to test,

or even produce, that usefulness."[68] Evidently, this does not mean that I intend to jettison the plan of approaching literary texts for insights into the aforementioned topics. What I hope to gain from an informed, careful reading of those texts with an instrumental attitude is too valuable to be dispensed with. This is in line with the argument of Attridge and many others before and after him who acknowledge that

> this attitude has been highly productive, giving us valuable accounts of literary works as indices to the historical, sociological, and ideological texture of earlier periods and other cultures and to the psychic and sometimes somatic constitution of authors, injecting literature into political struggles (in the name of humanism, the working class, oppressed races and nationalities, women, and homosexuals, to name just a few), and exemplifying in literary works important features of linguistic structure, rhetorical and formal organization, and generic conventions. (Attridge 7)

So instead of not approaching literature with my questions for fear of being accused of irresponsible literary instrumentalism, I follow Attridge's line of argument stressing the importance of the mode of reading when approaching the literary text with an instrumental attitude. He points out that there is a crucial and "obvious distinction between a reading that sees as its task the pragmatic utilization of the work it reads and one that comes armed (or rather disarmed) with a readiness to respond to the work's distinctive utterance and is prepared to accept the consequences of doing so" (9). In view of the achievements of the instrumental attitude in literary analysis und the possibility of responsibly approaching literary texts Attridge endorses "the judicious use of literary evidence" and claims that it is "clearly as valid as other modes of access to a vanished or otherwise inaccessible culture" (8). In my study, I intend to approach the fictional texts in this "armed (or rather disarmed)" way Attridge implies: not reading the texts as proof of preconceived ideas or mere evidence for my hypotheses but acknowledging and appreciating the specificities, contradictions and ambiguities I encounter.

[68] Attridge 7. Attridge points out that the "project in question may be political, moral, historical, biographical, psychological, cognitive, or linguistic." (ibid.)

# II Terms: Religion, Violence and Hostile Othering

What do we mean when we talk about 'religion'? And what exactly is 'violence'? And how does it relate to religion? Both religion and violence seem to have obvious, straightforward and universal meanings but actually do not. Furthermore, any attempt at a universal definition of each of these terms runs the risk of getting deeply entangled in political or even ideological debates. In his monograph *Cruel Creeds, Virtuous Violence* (2010), Eller deplores that both religion and violence are phenomena that "are too often taken for granted" and declares it an obligation for scholars like him to "not assume that we already understand the nature of violence or the nature of religion." (9) And he goes on to explain that this necessarily leads to short-sighted disquisitions on the topic: "It is a neglected but essential fact that we cannot appreciate the relationship between religion and violence unless we grasp the nature and meaning of the two partners in this relationship." (11)

As I already pointed out in the introduction, there is a huge, continuously growing and highly diverse corpus of scholarly texts that try to figure out exactly how religion and violence relate and why. I do not intend to provide new or even final definitions of either one term here or anywhere else. Also, I do not attempt to give yet another explanation of why religion is inherently violent or inherently peaceful or neither. Instead, my purpose in this chapter is twofold: Firstly, I intend to show that I am highly aware of the complexity and contextual dependency of this dissertation's core terms. Secondly, I mean to clarify for the reader my specific interpretation and use of these terms in the textual analyses that are at the heart of my dissertation. This chapter also establishes the theoretical and conceptual basis for the following chapter, which provides the reader with the specific historical and socio-political context of religion and violence in India.

## II.1 Approaching the Concept of Religion

The term and the different concepts of, as well as approaches to, religion are important in the frame of this study. Hence, a short introduction into the complexity and inconsistency of the field is provided at this point. As with most abstract, umbrella terms, there are a multitude of possible choices for what it is that one understands by the very term, and hence which concept it is that one refers to by 'religion'. Many recent studies on topics related to religion address this issue. In *The Blackwell Companion to Religion and Violence* (Ed. Murphy, 2014), for example, the whole first chapter "Coming to Terms with Terms" by John D. Carlson is

dedicated to the discussion of what the author calls "the 'R-word' " (8). As Carlson points out, religion is "a rather peculiar term, fraught with paradox" and he goes on to explain the nature of this paradox:

> It is at once pregnant with meaning yet, for some scholars, increasingly vague and meaningless. Elements in the media suggest that religion is everywhere around us, while scholars of religion deny that religion is anything but a social construction. (8)

So what is it then: An extremely meaningful concept or a meaningless category, an omnipresent social reality or nothing but a "social construction"? The answer, it seems, highly depends on whom you ask. Obviously, there are more definitions of 'religion,' and debates over the appropriateness of these definitions and their uses, than may possibly be presented here. [69] As the concept of 'religion' is such a debated one, however, it is deemed necessary at least to refer to the nature and reasons of its complexity.

When looking at different definitions of the religion, one finds that there are two classical, fundamentally oppositional approaches. These are commonly termed the 'Essentialist' or 'Intellectualist' approach and the 'Functionalist' approach respectively. Adherents of the 'Essentialist' school tend to perceive religion as definable in terms of some universal, trans-cultural essence. The underlying idea is that religion is a private, intellectual activity that may be distinguished by some singular, cross-culturally common essential trait or core experience. Empirical, obvious differences between religions are deemed to be only external, secondary aspects or manifestations of some universal belief. *Essentialist* definitions tend to promote the insider point of view, i.e. that only those who adhere to a certain religion are truly capable to know its 'essence,' and, thus, to define it (see McCutcheon 1-4).

Adherents of the 'Functionalist' school prefer to consider religious phenomena as being solely describable in terms of their empirically specific manifestations and functions. These scholars categorically deny the possibility of explaining or defining the actual source, origin or object of religious feeling, and thus concentrate on the empirical manifestations of religious feeling(s). Their basic assumption is that there are a number of universal, existential needs that are common to all human beings and that religion has the vital function to answer those basic needs. The functionalist stance usually goes together with a preference of the outsider's view:

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[69] For the historical origins and the evolution of the concept, see Christian Auffahrt's and Hubert Mohr's article "Religion" (1999); Jonathan Z. Smith's "Religion, Religions, Religious" (1998); and Karénina Kollmar-Paulenz's "Religion – Historical and Theoretical Perspectives" (lecture script from 9. 10. 2007).

Religious phenomena are deemed to be described and evaluated more objectively and thus scientifically only by people who are not affiliated to that religion. This focus on the empirically observable features is supposed to render theories testable and more valid. The shift of focus from religions' universal essence to their functions is an illusionary trick, however: while acknowledging the impossibility of detecting the primary, essential function of religion, functionalists opt for the compromise to assume universal underlying psycho-social and biological needs. The functionalists' apparently atheistic stance is questionable since they do presuppose the existence of some non-empirical source of those behaviours and institutions they study. Thus, they set aside questions concerning the existence and nature of the source and tend to authorize assumptions of the insiders of the religious phenomena in question (see McCutcheon 5-7).

There are other possibilities of approaching the definition of religious phenomena, however. A more recent approach, aiming at elaborating on some of the shortcomings of the two classical approaches, is the "Family Resemblances"-approach, which was originally developed by Ludwig Wittgenstein in the context of defining the phenomenon 'language'.

> [A]ll members of a particular group [i.e. 'religions'] more or less share a series of traits or characteristics of relevance to the classifier. ...all members of a common group overlap to varying degrees and in differing respects, ... all members share in the identity, to varying degrees. Group membership [i.e. being a religion or not], Wittgenstein argued, is never a matter of yes or no [...] but always a matter of degree. (McCutcheon 7-8)

Unfortunately, this approach does not solve the basic problem of the cultural situatedness of the scholar who, in order to decide over group membership, needs some prototype of 'religion' as a starting point from which to draw important traits that then may be used to classify another phenomenon as 'religious'. Thus, it is necessary to always be prepared to adjust the prototype that underlies each effort to categorize new phenomena. On the whole, however, the "Family Resemblances"-approach seems to be a very compelling way in which to conceive of the abstract concept of 'religion' and different existing 'religions'.

No matter which school of thought is consulted, however, there are a few things that everyone can agree on: Firstly, that the concept of religion is regarded as a cultural phenomenon or "cultural system," as Clifford Geertz termed it.[70] Secondly, that a basic separation of the 'religious' from other spheres of social existence and practice such as politics

[70] See the chapter "Religion as a Cultural System" in Clifford Geertz's *The Interpretation of Cultures* (1973), pp. 87-125.

or economics in 'real life' is denied. The separation of the religious sphere is only of use for theoretical, heuristic purposes – a mind game, in a way. To say it with Karénina Kollmar-Paulenz' words:

> In today's Science of Religion it is common knowledge that by using the term "religion" a distinct cultural field is distinguished which in a given culture may not be seen as distinct. Thus the continued use of the term only seems possible as a heuristic means of research.[71]

This does not imply, however, that there is no such phenomenon as 'religion'. Neither does this statement amount to the claim that 'religion' is no more than an invention of the scholar of the science of religion, as Jonathan Z. Smith concludes in his essay "Religion, Religions, Religious".

> "Religion" is not a native term; it is a term created by scholars for their intellectual purposes and therefore is theirs to define. It is a second-order, generic concept that plays the same role in establishing a disciplinary horizon that a concept such as "language" plays in linguistics or "culture" plays in anthropology (281-82).

Even if Smith is correct with respect to the universal, standardised concept of 'religion' as a category of research within the academic study, the historically and culturally specific phenomena, which scholars try to describe with the concept of 'religion' and which they refer to as religions, are certainly no inventions:

> [I]n a global perspective it has been a means to standardize specific concepts of self-perception in not only European societies, but also such heterogeneous Asian societies like China, Japan, Tibet and Mongolia (Kollmar-Paulenz 8).

Even if it is not possible to achieve a definition of 'religion' that is trans-culturally and trans-historically valid, due to the "Verschiedenheit und unterschiedlichen Reichweite der vorfindlichen Selbst- und Fremddeutungen,"[72] the term continues to be used widely within the academic realm as well as outside it. Thus, it is sensible to stick to the term and the concept, not, however, without being aware of its problematic nature.

In European academia, it has become common usage to conceive of 'religion' as an abstract system of beliefs and cultural practices, as well as man's personal feelings and relation to some deity or sacred entity (faith).[73] Most scholars, who are predominantly anthropologists, who have

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[71] Kollmar-Paulenz 8.

[72] Auffahrt and Mohr 163.

[73] Kollmar-Paulenz points out that "[r]eligion has come to mean a comprehensive interpretation of the world that shapes the thoughts, actions and feelings of men, either in a group or as individual" (5).

ever attempted to define religion cross-culturally insist on the importance of the existence of some kind of supernatural (as opposed to natural), sacred or paranormal[74] entity, which then forms the *sine qua non* source and basis of the religion.[75] This also applies to most of the definitions attempting to "state the *essence* of religion," which William P. Alston presents and briefly discusses in his entry "Religion" in the *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. While Alston dismisses them as "deficient on grounds both of necessity and sufficiency" (367), he nevertheless acknowledges that these definitions, and the single features they stress, "contribute to our understanding of the nature of religion" (368) in general. Most scholars who discuss the concept of religion share Alston's view. Instead of providing a concise and short definition, many of them have opted for providing a set of essential or at least cross-culturally very common features that those phenomena classified as religion usually have. This is what Alston does. Taking essentialist definitions as a basis he proceeds to identify nine "religion-making characteristics":

(1) Belief in supernatural beings (gods).
(2) A distinction between sacred and profane objects.
(3) Ritual acts focused on sacred objects.
(4) A moral code believed to sanctioned by the gods.
(5) Characteristically religious feelings (awe, sense of mystery, sense of guilt, adoration), which tend to be aroused in the presence of sacred objects and during practice of ritual, and which are connected in idea with the gods.
(6) Prayer and other forms of communication with gods.

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[74] Anthropologist H. Sidky points out that "discussing religion in terms of the categories of natural and supernatural is problematic in the context of non-Western societies that do not make such a distinction" and that "definitions of religion based on such a distinctions ... are inappropriate when applied cross-culturally." (10) Following the anthropologist James Lett, he suggests the use of the term "paranormal" instead of supernatural. According to Lett, the term paranormal "embraces the entire range of transcendental beliefs, covering at once everything that would otherwise be called magical, religious, supernatural, metaphysical, occult, or parapsychological." (Lett 110) For further discussion of the relation between religion and the paranormal see Sidky's chapter "Religion and the Paranormal" (105-122) or Lett's "Science, Religion, and Anthropology."

[75] One of the most prominent representatives of this line of thought is anthropologist Anthony Wallace (1966), who considers the "supernatural premise" the original building block of every religion. According to Wallace, this foundation or core is then complemented by thirteen further elements, which may be selected and combined differently depending on the specific religion. In his monograph, Eller summarizes Wallace's thirteen "elementary particles" as follows: "Prayer, or speech directed to supernatural entities," "music and dancing and singing," "physiological exercises, including substance use and physical hardships and trials," "exhortations or orders, encouragements, and threats," "myth, or narratives about supernatural entities," "simulation or imitation such as magic, witchcraft, and ritual," "mana, or ideas about the power one gets from the contact with powerful or sacred objects," "taboo, or prohibitions against contact with certain things," "feasts," "sacrifice," "congregation, or group gathering and activity," "inspiration, such as hallucination and mysticism," and "symbols." (Wallace paraphrased in Eller 50)

> (7) A worldview, or a general picture of the world as a whole and the place of the individual therein. This picture contains some specification of an overall purpose or point of the world and an indication of how the individual fits into it.
> (8) A more or less total organization of one's life based on the worldview.
> (9) A social group bound together by the above. (368)

Alston stresses that these characteristics "do not just happen to be associated in religion" and that they are "intimately interconnected in several ways. " (368) He furthermore points out that while the features he names "neither singly not in combination constitute tight necessary and sufficient conditions for something being a religion, nevertheless "each of them contributes to making something a religion." (368) His solution to the obvious dilemma is the cautious claim that "[w]hen enough of these characteristics are present to a sufficient degree, we have a religion." (369) Following Alston, Eller concludes: "when general purpose cognitive, emotional, and behavioural traits are mixed and deployed in certain ways they are 'religion,' and when they are mixed and deployed in other ways they are not 'religion.'" (51) This conclusion in itself is too vague and too general to be remarkable. The four implications Eller suggests that this modular, complex way of conceptualising religion has, however, are highly interesting:

> First, [...] religion is not a thing but rather a composite; no one element or module is essential. Second, the modules that compose religion are not themselves essentially "religious;" [...] third, there little if anything that separates religion from nonreligion, other than the supernatural premise [...] Finally, since religion is a modular and composite phenomenon whose modules are not uniquely religious, it follows that all sorts of other normal human traits and tendencies could also become connected and enmeshed with religion. (Eller 51-52)

When discussing the relation between religion, on the one hand, and violence, which is an extremely common phenomenon pervading human existence, on the other hand, especially the second and the fourth implication are of great importance and thought provoking. If no composite element of religion is essentially religious and, at the same time, everything human can "become connected and enmeshed with religion" (Eller 52), this also applies to violence: "Normal human violence, directed toward religious objects and goals or related to religious groups and beliefs and causes, becomes religious violence." (ibid.) Following Eller, there is no such thing as religious violence in the sense that it is different in kind from other forms of violence. It is simply "normal human violence" perpetrated in a certain (religiously related) context for certain (religiously related) reasons. While this is a highly plausible argument, it does not explain the nature of the relationship between religion and violence, and why many think this relationship to be a close one. In order to attempt such an explanation, it is necessary to first have a closer look at the concept of violence, which is as complex as that of religion.

## II.2 Approaching the Concept of Violence

What do I refer to when I speak of violence? Like Eller points out, there "are few things in life that people claim to understand better and to deplore more than violence." (11) In fact, he argues, it is "not a simple phenomenon but a complex and multidimensional one." (18) This becomes evident the moment one has a closer look at different definitions of violence and at the many angles — e.g. historical, socio-cultural, moral, legal angles — this phenomenon can be approached.

In his entry "Violence" in the *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Duane L. Cady states that "in its primary use violence refers to swift, extreme physical force typically involving injury and violation to persons or property." (677) This usage of the term is certainly the most commonly acknowledged one. It includes subjective violent acts perpetrated by identifiable persons against other persons — i.e. interpersonal violence — or against themselves, i.e. self-inflicted violence. There are other conceptualizations of the term, however, even if they are less widespread and not equally acknowledged inside as well as outside academia, which applies specifically to the "wider use of the term extending beyond the overtly physical to covert, psychological, and institutional violence." (677) Pointing out the consequences of such a broad usage, Cady says that "racism, sexism, economic exploitation, and ethnic and religious persecution all are possible examples of violence; that is, all involve constraints that injure and violate persons, even if not always physically." (677) This highly inclusive approach originated from the Norwegian sociologist Johan Galtung who coined the term "structural violence" (1969). Galtung's concept promoted the use of "the term violence in a very wide and extended way to refer to any form of social injustice whether inflicted by individuals or by institutions or by the workings of society at large, and whether or not it involves the deliberate infliction of personal injury by episodes of physical or psychological force." (Coady 616)

Many scholars have been inspired by Galtung's ideas, among them Slowenian philosopher Slavoj Žižek in his text *Violence. Six Sideways Reflections* (2008). Žižek's concept of "objective violence" reverberates with elements of Galtung's concept of "structural violence". To Žižek, objective violence is the invisible, often intangible counterpart or rather complement of "subjective violence," which Žižek defines as the "directly visible [...] violence performed by a clearly identifiable agent" (1). He points out that objective violence, even though invisible, is "inherent to this normal state of things" und hence vital "to make sense of what otherwise seem to be 'irrational' explosions of [subjective] violence" (2). For Žižek, objective violence further

sub-divides into "'symbolic'" and "'systemic' violence" (1). With regard to "symbolic violence," which he defines as the "violence embodied in language and its forms," Žižek stresses that "this violence is not only at work in the obvious — and extensively studied — cases of incitement and of relations of social domination reproduced in our habitual speech forms," but that "there is a more fundamental form of violence still that pertains to language as such, to its imposition of a certain universe of meaning" (1). Last but not least, Žižek turns to defining "systemic violence," which he paraphrases with "the often catastrophic consequences of the smooth functioning of our economic and political systems" (1) and compares to "the notorious 'dark matter' of physics, the counterpart to an all-too-visible subjective violence."[76] While he acknowledges that systemic violence, just as objective violence in general, is usually "invisible," he urges to take it "into account if one is to make sense of what otherwise seem to be irrational' explosions of subjective violence" (2).

This broad, highly inclusive use of the term violence is not uncontroversial, however. It has been claimed that it is, in fact, "confusing because people do not ordinarily mean by 'violence' any and every form of social injustice, they mean such things as beating people up or torturing them with electrodes." (616) Certainly, this dissertation is not the place to discuss that issue at length. From the preceding short section it should have become evident, however, that the boundaries between (interpersonal/subjective) violence and social injustice (or structural/objective violence) are highly fluid and that, no matter how one decides to name the observed phenomena, it is important to be aware of their close interdependency.

So far, one of the things all of the above definitions seem to agree upon is that violence, no matter how easily identifiable or (non-)human the agent, is something "that harms someone" (Eller 13). Usually, people think of violence as something bad that is done by bad or evil people like the cold-blooded murderer who kills his or her victim without empathy for her or his personal gain. This generalization would imply that violence is always unacceptable und unjustifiable, which, of course, is not true. There are many circumstances and contexts where violence is, in fact, socially accepted and justifiable: Like in the case of the victim of an assault that physically hurts, possibly even kills, her or his opponent in self-defence. And what about the surgeon who has to cut open a patient in order to safe her or his life? Obviously, there are

[76] Žižek 2. It would be very interesting to discuss Žižek's concept of objective violence, and especially that of systemic violence, in relation to the concept of violence outlined by political philosopher Hannah Arendt. Arendt, in her essay *On Violence* (1969), juxtaposed violence and power, claiming that real (political) power ended when violence was employed.

no easy, context-independent answers to the question of what violence is. So while it seems to be a straightforward and generally shared view that violence is something bad, this view nevertheless necessitates a critical assessment because it points to something that is easily overlooked, namely that violence is "less a name for a kind of act than a judgement, a label that people put on certain instances of acts" (Eller 13) Clearly, specific contexts and moral perspective are of great importance when talking about violence. As Eller points out, "the real issue appears to be not the damage that is inflicted by the [violent] behaviour but the *legitimacy* of the behaviour that caused the damage." (14) In fact, the key to evaluating violence seems to be commensurability of the behaviour in question, which again heavily depends point of view and context. These observations suggest that

> violence is only a *problem* when it crosses a certain line, when it goes beyond the bounds of "acceptable violence." And since we humans determine, based on our values and beliefs, what is acceptable violence, these bounds differ for different societies and historical periods and for different groups and individuals within a society or period. (Eller 14)

So, obviously, the specific socio-cultural and/or historical context humans live in determines to a considerable degree not only what they define as violence but also which kind of violence they consider (not) justifiable or acceptable. These conclusions are closely related to findings made by researchers in the fields of psychology and the social sciences who argue that violent behaviour cannot exclusively or even primarily be ascribed to individual personality traits.[77] Based on observations and social experiments, they claim that "violence is mostly *learned* and *situational*" (Eller 16) and that

> "people's behavior is shaped at least as much by the situations they occupy as by their 'personality'—that we all know the expectations of specific circumstances and roles and act accordingly [...] when we are in those circumstances and roles. [...] Thus, if we find ourselves in violent conditions, we act violently, even if it is not in our "nature." (Eller 17)

After conducting the by now famous Stanford Prison Experiment in 1971, the psychologist Philip Zimbardo found that his thesis of the situational conditionality of violence was correct.

[77] At this point, Eller refers to two renowned experiments, namely the Stanford Prison Experiment conducted by Philip Zimbardo in 1971 and the "authority experiments" conducted by psychologist Stanley Milgram (first implementation in New Haven in 1961). Milgram published his findings first in the article "Behavioral Study of Obedience" (1963) and later in the monograph (1974). Interestingly, he referred back to Hannah Arendt's then quite controversial thesis about the banality of evil put forward in her *Eichmann in Jerusalem* (1963). Milgram said that his experiments confirmed what Arendt had claimed about the willingness of "normal" people to commit atrocities if only these people are placed in the necessary circumstances.

Zimbardo furthermore provided a list of conditions that he claimed considerably increase the likelihood of violent behaviour, consisting of

- an ideology or set of justifying beliefs for the actions, which is presented by the authority;
- dehumanization of the victims, that is, referring to them as "animals" or "insects" or "dirt";
- diffusion of responsibility, such that the actual perpetrator is not directly or ultimately responsible for the actions or the consequences of the actions;
- gradual escalation of the violence;
- gradual shift from "just" to "unjust" behaviour;
- verbal distortions that obscure the real nature of the behaviour, for example calling harm "discipline" or "purification";
- providing no means of escape from the situation—what we might call a "totalized" or "absolute" situation;
- deindividuation, which involves methods to remove or submerge the individuality of the actors, such as hoods and masks, uniforms, and group pressures; and
- above all else, blind obedience to authority. (Zimardo in Eller 17-18)

Based on these factors and the general observation that basically every person can resort to violent behaviour given the 'right' situation, Eller proposes a "model of the expanding scope and scale of violence," wherein he identifies "six independent but related contributing dimensions or levels." (18) He claims that if the specific properties and condition within a certain context are met, this context "activates these various areas, [and] it will be prone to more violence and more extensive, intensive, and acceptable violence." (19) The six dimensions of Eller's model of violence are "instinct or the individual,"[78] "integration into groups," "identity," "institutions,"[79] "interests"[80] and "ideology." (19) While this is not the place for an in-depth discussion of Eller's model and it's six dimensions, I will nevertheless look at three of his

[78] The first dimension is, probably, the most obvious one. Every human being is "capable of committing violence." (Eller 19) If that were not the case, violent behaviour in individuals would not exist. On the individual level, the reasons for violence, or at the minimum aggression, are manifold. A common reason is that of frustration of the satisfaction of (basic) needs or the fulfilment of wishes: When a creature in general or a human being in particular encounters "a barrier between itself and a desired object (say, food or a mate) or a constraint on its movement (say a chain or trap on its leg)." (Eller 21) In that case, creatures often tend to "resort to force and aggression to eradicate that barrier or constraint." (ibid.)

[79] In contrast to a group's beliefs, moral values and standards of behaviour, which are potentially quite abstract, institutions are "real, enduring and organized" and they "constitute the ongoing social arrangements within which people live and act." (Eller 31) Eller points out that institutions "regularize and legitimize violence." (36)

[80] According to Eller, most human groups are "at least potentially if not actually an interest group as well" and "interests are largely what motivate [violence]". (36) He claims that "integrated groups, identity, and institutions provide the parties and the organizations for violence, but it is the interests that provide the reasons and justifications." (ibid.) Differences between groups do not necessitate violence, but unbridgeable conflict of interests between in-group and out-group probably does.

dimensions in greater detail here, namely integration into groups, identity and ideology. Above that, I will use Eller's six dimensions in the following chapter to identify aspects of religion that increase the probability of violence.

Integration into groups is the second dimension in Eller's model of violence. He argues that while human beings are capable of violent behaviour as individuals, their integration into groups seem to make violence even "more common and more extreme." (Eller 22) Groups, it appears, "have a mind of their own that is [...] more mindless than the individual." (ibid.) An important factor for a group's coherence is "the need for 'unifying agents" (Eller 23). According to Eller, who refers back to Gustav Le Bon's research on group dynamics,[81] these "agents," which serve the eminent purpose of keeping groups both "cohesive and active," are predominantly negative and include "hatred, imitation, persuasion and coercion, leadership, action, and suspicion." (23-24) Among those factors, Eller points out in line with Le Bon, hatred is one of the strongest, insisting that "a mobilized group or movement needs an enemy, a 'them,' to fuel its organization and motivation." (24) Further closely related aspects specifically of group behaviour that facilitate violence are those of deindividuation and leadership. In his famous study *The True Believer: Thoughts on the Nature of Mass Movements* (1951), the US American philosopher Eric Hoffer described the consequences of deindividuation as follows:

> When we renounce the self and become part of a compact whole, we [...] are also rid of personal responsibility. There is no telling to what extremes of cruelty and ruthlessness a man will go when he is freed from the fears, hesitations, doubts, and the vague stirrings of decency that go with individual judgment. When we lose our individual independence in the corporateness of a mass movement, we find a new freedom—freedom to hate, bully, lie, torture, murder, and betray without shame and remorse. (Hoffer in Eller 24)

Based on these and related findings, psychologist Roy F. Baumeister coined the term "group effect," which, according to Eller, "exhibits several of the features of violent potential" such as "diffusion of responsibility, deindividuation, a division of violent labor (such that no one person performs, or even comprehends, the full scale and sequence of violence), and separation of the decision maker [i.e. leader] from the hands- on perpetrator." (25) Most if not all studies of group behaviour have found that usually "groups can be and typically are more violent than lone individuals" (Eller 27). Interestingly, this is true "even when the groups are essentially fictional and imaginary." (ibid.) As Eller warns, "we should not underestimate the human imagination in liking friends and disliking foes," and he continues to point out that "even an

[81] Eller at this point refers to Gustav Le Bon's 1869 study *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind*.

imaginary group can have an identity of sorts." (ibid.) Those who are familiar with Benedict Anderson's study on nationalism know that "imagined communities" like nations are not only very real to those who consider themselves a part of them but that perceived national identities can have considerable, often violent, consequences.

Unsurprisingly then, identity is the third dimension in Eller's model of violence and it is closely related to that of group membership. According to him, "human groups probably always have at least minimal identity qualities." (ibid.) So group membership usually "crosses into *identification* with that group." This is the case especially when that group "has four components: a name, a history, some salient symbols, and at least some interpersonal interaction." (Eller 27-28) The name or label is like a spell that brings a group and the accompanying identity into existence, as it helps to mentally differentiate a set of human beings from all others on the basis of some specific characteristic or belief, making this "collectivity more real and more identifiable." (Eller 28) A history shared by the group's members, containing their collectively remembered hardships and losses but also their achievements and successes, is a further "powerful cognitive and motivational factor". (28) This history is of especial importance in so far as that history, while it stores events of the past, "tends to point to the future," suggesting, for example, the need for righting past wrongs and thereby providing the group members with a shared "*destiny*, its imagined or ideal collective future." (ibid.) Like a common history, common symbols are of great importance for the strength, coherence and continuity of group identity. They are "the meaningful public manifestations of the collectivity, its history, and its identity; they are where memory and identity are deposited and displayed." (ibid.) According to Eller, "the more symbols a group has, and the more meaning is conveyed by them, the greater the identity-making and identity-carrying capacity." (ibid.) Last but not least, Eller turns to the relevance of interpersonal interaction. Eller points out that personal bonds and physical proximity of time and place are very important:

> [T]he more actual personal interaction, ideally face-to-face interaction, the stronger the bonds of community and identity may be. [...] humans can identify measurably even when face-to-face interaction is missing or impossible; the very mental impression of groupness, of category membership, works powerfully on us. And we will never interact with all the members of larger and more dispersed aggregates. But the ones whom we interact with tend to have the strongest pull on us. In a certain sense, local identities are the most compelling ones, and group leaders in particular may take pains to have members interact and bond. (28-29)

So while the relevance of interpersonal interaction does not negate the existence and the motivational power of imagined communities, the perceived membership in these communities or groups and the resulting imagined identities, it certainly qualifies it to some extent.

There are further important factors that call into question the 1:1-relation between an individual's group membership and her or his identity. One of these is the difference between sheer group membership and identification with that group and its values. From the point of view of the individual, being a group member — say, belonging to the 'group' of white US Americans by virtue of being born into that group — does not necessarily make her or him adopt that group's (perceived or real) values as her or his. She or he might objectively belong to a group and yet identify with another group's ideas. As Eller explains, it is common in the social sciences to distinguish between the terms *in-group*, *out-group* and *reference group*:

> A group in which an individual is a member [is] his or her *in-group*; a group that one does not belong to is an *out-group*. However, more significant still is one's *reference group*, the group to which one looks for standards of thought, behaviour, and values and for identification. (Eller 28).

If one accepts this general idea, it is obvious that group membership, with its potentially great impact on an individual's identity and her or his moral values and standards of thoughts and behaviour, can play a huge role when it comes to the causes for and the probability of violent behaviour. For once, as Eller claims, "violence is more likely and more severe against an out-group than the in-group." (30) Also, the greater the perceived (or real) conflict of interests between one's in-group and one's out-group and the "the further 'out' the out-group is, the greater the potential for, and the approval of, violence against it." (ibid.) Taking into account the concept of the reference group and its implications in terms of a group member's deviating identifications, however, this opposition between in-group and out-group and the potentially violent consequences are no longer carved in stone.

Furthermore, it is important to remember that no one individual has only one in-group it potentially identifies with. Every human being, by virtue of its birth, upbringing and socialisation belongs to many groups at once. As Eller explains, "any one person may be an American, a New Yorker, a black, a male, and a Yankees fan simultaneously" and he continuous to claim that "these various identities link him to some other humans and distance him from others." (31) Evidently, it depends both on the specific context and the individual, which of these group memberships are of the greatest relevance to her or him at a certain time and predominantly or even exclusively rule her or his behaviour. The fact remains, however,

that "the presence or absence of cross-cutting ties is an important variable" especially when it comes to violent behaviour because "such competing and cross-cutting identities and allegiances can actually reduce or limit violence, since people cannot split off into simple binary 'us-versus-them' pairs." (Eller 31) Hence, acknowledging that human beings have complex, multifaceted identities and are "diversely different," as Amartya Sen terms it, is a powerful argument against violence between groups.

So while all significant social groups, as Eller points out, "consist of individuals sharing some identity" and are "organized by institutions to pursue interests," it does not follow that these groups are set against each other in violent opposition (39). The main reason for this, Eller claims, is that only few groups "add the sixth and most incendiary ingredient of ideology." (ibid.) For Eller, it is ideology, the sixth dimension in his model of violence, that is the "source" and ultimate basis for all other dimensions. (43) A group's ideology is the view of the world all its members agree on and belief in, it contains all "the ideas and beliefs and values shared by a group." (39) As such, an ideology is far more than a temporarily held opinion by an individual in a specific context. It is contains timeless "factual claims about the world" as well as "values and judgements and perspectives" all of which are usually considered to be unquestionably true, universally valid and of the greatest importance by the group's members. (ibid.) By virtue of being a kind of "theory of everything" that prefers simple black-or-white and absolute answers, an ideology allows no room for uncertainty, ambivalence, contradiction or doubt or a group member's multiple identifications with other, potentially opposing groups. In an ideological group, the individual is denied the right to a multifaceted identity, to be diversely different. Instead, her or his identity is totally defined by their group membership and their adherence to the group's ideology. As a consequence, "ideological groups tend to see the world in very dualistic, us-versus-them, terms" (Eller 42), which makes violence not only quite likely but also easily justifiably.

Further features of most, if not all, ideologies, which tend to make violence seem not only justified and legitimate but even necessary, are "idealism and a sense of moral superiority distinguished by absolute certainty in the rightness and ultimate success of the movement and its leadership." (Eller 40) As a consequence of this, the members of an ideological group can be absolutely certain to be "the good people with the good intentions [...] acting in the name of something higher." (Eller 41) By the same token this means that they can be certain of the unrightful, evil intentions of all others and "that those who do not belong to and oppose the

group, the outsiders, are not just bad but immoral." (ibid.) This kind of moralism precludes any openness to alternative views or courses of action and frustrates any sort of compromise with outsiders. The presence of an ideology, Eller concludes, significantly raises the probability that a group resorts to violence: "While there are certainly nonideological groups and identities and institutions and interests, ideological ones most thoroughly fulfill and focus all the qualities that support violence into an effective system." (43-44)

Summing up his findings on the mechanisms of violence, Eller states that in order to resort to violence "a human needs only a belief system [ideology] that teaches that he or she is acting for a good reason (even a "higher cause"), under someone else's authority as a member of a (threatened) group, in pursuit of interests." (44) Given specific, identifiable circumstances, Eller argues, violence is all but inevitable: "if the individual can learn, by way of gradual escalation, to commit violence against someone who is worth less—or completely worthless, less than a human being—then violence becomes not only possible but likely, if not certain." (44)

## II.3 Religious Alterity and 'Hostile Othering'

In line with the idea that certain conditions within specific anthropological, socio-cultural dimensions – i.e. instincts, groups, identity, interests, institutions and ideology – are specifically conducive to violent behaviour, it makes sense to have a closer look at religion in terms of those dimensions. In other words: Does religion have some or even all of those six dimensions conducive to violence? According to Eller this is indeed the case, even though he insists that "religion is not inherently and irredeemably violent; and certainly not the essence and source of all violence." (76) He claims that "religion can and frequently does particularly effectively provide the conditions that satisfy the six dimensions [...] in our model of violence" (76) and, on the basis of Alston's nine religion-making characteristics, proceeds to explain how religion satisfies these dimensions.

He starts by referring to religion as "a group phenomenon," which is "supported by or arises from certain human innate or instinctual traits." (76) Due to being a group phenomenon, Eller claims, religion "is subject to all the (many negative) features of group phenomena, including exclusionary membership, (us versus them), collective ideas and values [...], and the leadership principle, with the attendant expectations of conformity if not strict obedience." (76-77) Moving on to the next of the six dimensions, Eller points out that "any religion offers an identity (both personal and collective)" and, above that, "contributes to formation or production of individual members, of personality, of moods and motivations." (77) By

providing identificatory "symbols and stories that function like lenses to shape perception, interpretation, and, most critically, action," Eller insists that religion "infiltrates and colonizes experience," especially "in the small and insignificant moments," which results in the "penetration and saturation of everyday life with the dictates [...] of religion. (77)

In a similar way, the dimension of institutions has an important role in all religions and thereby for its members: "[E]very religion contains its institutions" that may include "established rituals and liturgies, as well as the offices or specialist roles in the system." (77) What is of special importance, however, is that these religious institutions do not exist separately, in a socio-cultural vacuum, but that they "penetrate society" instead and "entangle with other institutions, including marriage and the family." (77) In terms of interests, the fifth dimension in Eller's model of violence, he points out that any religion "has its interests, both individually and collectively" and that "a religious group is not only a community of confession but also a community of interests." (77) These interests, Eller finds, are twofold: On the one hand, a religious community is interested in "the preservation and perpetuation of the group and its doctrines and norms." On the other hand and due to "the particular beliefs of the religion," however, the essential interest of group preservation is complemented by "other, more specific, and often more powerful interests, such as attaining heaven or avoiding hell." (77) Obviously, these specific interests depend on and are indeed inspired and justified by the central doctrines, norms and worldview of the religion. To put it differently, the interests of a religious group are defined and inspired by its ideology.

For Eller religion and ideology, which is the sixth dimension in his model of violence, do not only share many characteristics like many scholars before him have pointed out. Instead, Eller claims, "a religion *is* an ideology" (78) and goes on to explain, why:

> Religion-as-ideology provides a meaning framework derived from an external (here extrahuman), source, rules and standards linked to that framework, bonds between individuals and individuals and the group crystallized in institutions, and a discourse of legitimation for the group's actions and institutions. In fact, religion may be the ultimate ideology, since its framework is so totally external (i.e. supernaturally ordained or given), its rules and standards so obligatory, its bonds so unbreakable, and its legitimation so absolute. (78)

While he acknowledges that the "specific ideological assertions vary," he insists that they all share the "supernatural premise," which according to Eller "provides the most effective possible

legitimation for what we are ordered or ordained to do."[82] Evidently, for Eller this moral legitimation pertained and indeed guaranteed by the supernatural premise of religion-as-ideology is at the very core of the relation between religion and violence:

> [The supernatural premise] makes the group, its identity, its institutions, its interests, and its particular ideology good and right [...] by definition. Therefore, if it is in the identity or the institutions or the interests or the ideology of a religion to be violent, that, too, is good and right, even righteous. (78)

Concluding his discussion in how far religion satisfies the six dimensions of his model of violence, Eller stresses that religion is not inherently violent. He points out three factors, however, that result in a potentially close relation between religion and violence:

> First, insofar as it meets the conditions that promote violence, [religion] will be violent. Second, the particular doctrines and worldview of a religion may encourage or advocate violence beyond those basic conditions; [...] Third, as a modular thing, religion can easily attracts and integrates other phenomena like nationalism, class, race, gender, ethnicity, and even elements of popular culture, as well as violence *qua* violence. (78-79).

It is important to note that for Eller religion is first and foremost a "social and ideological system" drawing its legitimation from a supernatural, unquestionable source and dictating even the tiniest, most profane details of its members' every-day lives. It is this conceptualization of religion that leads him to provide a list of tendencies regarding violence that most, if not all, religions have. According to Eller, then, religion

> has the capacity and the tendency to
> - Create a reality in which violence is acceptable, necessary, and even desirable;
> - Attribute the authority for the violence to the greatest possible good, whether that is the believing community, the authorizing god(s) or spirit(s), or the cosmos itself;
> - Set leadership, at the human and superhuman level, that cannot be questioned or opposed;
> - Totalize identities in exclusive ways—an absolute "us" against an absolute "them";
> - Demonize "them" literally, since a nonhuman and subhuman category of "demons" becomes a metaphysical reality;

[82] Eller 78. The claim that theoretically boundless power of legitimation – even of the most violent acts – results from the supernatural premise can be understood as an effective invalidation of the theory that among all types of religion, monotheism has an especially violent nature. The theory that monotheism, due to its single source of absolute legitimation, is especially violent is still highly popular. One of the scholars who supposedly put forward the claim about monotheism's inherent tendency to violence was Jan Assmann in his book *Moses the Egyptian: The Memory of Egypt in Western Monotheism* (1997). After being heavily and repeatedly criticised for this position, Assmann went to great lengths to insist that he was in fact misunderstood and to explain that he not mean to declare monotheism as such violent. For more details on the debate concerning the violent nature of monotheism see also *The Price of Monotheism* (Assmann 2010), as well as *Die Gewalt des einen Gottes. Die Monotheismus-Debatte zwischen Jan Assman, Micha Brumlik, Peter Sloterdijk und anderen* (ed. Rolf Schieder, 2014).

- Provide an ideology that specifically calls for struggle, combat, resistance, and destruction against the human and subhuman others;
- Raise the stakes, with ultimate rewards and ultimate punishments for our behaviours, based on religious rules and expectations; and
- Establish an ultimate goal or end that cannot and must not fail and that can and must be pursued by any means possible. (79)

Mindful of the important reservation that "not all religions meet all these conditions" (79), I consider many of Eller's observations concerning the relation between religion and violence as highly interesting, illuminating and valid. This is especially due to his conception of religion as a "social and ideological system" that fulfils vital functions both for individuals and groups, which I think is very plausible indeed and in line with most definitions of religion. No matter which definition of religion is consulted, its functions for individuals and in societies as a whole are always of eminent importance. This is not only true for definitions originating in the Functionalist school. The great majority of scholars in the field agree on the idea that religion fulfils essential functions for human beings.

In the frame of my dissertation, it is primarily the ways in which religion — or, more precisely, religious alterity — is functionalised by individuals and societies that are in the focus of interest. This choice of focus does not imply, however, and neither do the accompanying basic assumptions in the frame of this project, the preference of the reductionist stance, which tends to conceive the phenomena commonly described as 'religious' in terms of their social functions only. Rather is it the case that during the examination of the objects of this study, i.e. of contemporary South Asian English novels which stage and discuss the phenomenon of *hostile Othering*, social tensions and violent conflicts in relation to religion, the thorough investigation into the ways in which religion is conceived of and how it can be functionalised — especially with regard to questions of identity and identity formation — turned out to be a mandatory task. The basic assumption of my project is that religion, questions of religious affiliation, and religious identity are ascribed, and, by virtue of this fact, are expected to fulfil, vital functions in many socio-cultural communities.

Religion's significance in the process of identity formation and in identificatory performances is commonly considered as one of its most important functions.[83] Religion and religious affiliation are often considered to be highly important elements among those basic

[83] Gephart 245 see also 261: "Religionen scheinen geradezu auf die Beantwortung der Identitätsfrage spezialisiert zu sein."

distinctions, which join a great amount of closely interrelated differences constituting identity.[84] In line with that, a person's religious affiliation may be closely related or even identical to their sense of belonging to a certain socio-cultural community. Closely related with its relevance in the formation of personal identity is the wide usage of religion or rather of religious 'labels' in the categorization of groups or individuals. This has considerable consequences, of course, not only for the community's members but also for its outsiders. [85]

Far from being an important factor in personal identity formation processes only, religion is also a culturally coded category. This means that religion — like ethnicity, gender, or class — has a central role in the on-going process of 'Othering': Usually, the term 'Othering' refers to processes of establishing, maintaining or reinforcing the existence of fundamental differences between 'us' and 'them,' as a means to define and secure one's own positive identity. These processes of 'Othering' on the basis of a bundle of characteristics or categories are common in everyday experience and behaviour: "Community identities are built upon identifications and exclusions by differentiating between us and them, the self and the other" (Pandey 2006: 114). The categories that serve as the basis of 'Othering' are usually markers of social differentiation that shape the meaning of 'us' and 'them,' such as gender, geography, ethnicity, ideology, or – like in this study – religion. Religion and religious affiliation have always been an important category of social differentiation and of 'Othering.'[86]

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[84] Giesen 14. Berhard Giesen, who calls these bundles of interrelated differences "Codes of collective identity," considers them as the most essential, fixed and socially binding distinctions contrasting a community's insiders with its outsiders. Giesen characterises three different 'codes of collective identity' with regard to "their manner of drawing up and maintaining borders, their internal structure and rituals, their conception of the outside world and their coping with the unfamiliar other": primordial codes, traditional codes and universalistic codes (18).

[85] Following P. Bourdieu, Amartya Sen points out that "social action can end up 'producing a difference where none existed,'" while "'social magic can transform people by telling them that they are different'" (27). He goes on to refer that "the social world constitutes differences by the mere fact of designing them. Even when a categorization is arbitrary or capricious, once they are articulated and recognized in terms of dividing lines, the groups thus classified acquire derivative relevance… and this can be a plausible enough basis for identities on both sides of the separating line." (ibid.)

[86] This has been especially relevant in colonial and also post-colonial India where 'Othering' on the basis of religion occurred on several levels. One important level is the basic Orientalist distinction between the rational, modern West and the irrational, deeply religious, pre-modern East. As Peter van der Veer states: "Orientalism gives religion a privileged status as the foremost site of essentialised difference between the religious East and the secular West" (2002: 173). Even if it did not originate in colonialism, the phenomenon of communalism in contemporary India, which can be considered as a kind of sectarianism or 'Othering' on the basis of religious affiliation, was considerably influenced and fuelled by the administrative practices of the colonial powers. Their introduction, for example, of religious affiliation as a census category achieved the status of one of the most effective tools in the frame of their strategy of 'divide et impera.'

The categorization of an individual or a whole group as fundamentally different or 'Other' usually implies the belief that the other(s) differ(s) from them in one or more aspects that they themselves consider or come to consider as essential for their own sense of identity. If, like in Sidhwa's novel, an essentialization of identity in terms of a single, negatively connoted category occurs, this specific identification transcends its original, 'natural' context (such as the unproblematic identification of a person as Hindu, Muslim or Christian in religious contexts) and becomes relevant in other contexts. This essentialization of identity involves that individual human beings are denied their natural claim to be "diversely different" (Sen xvi). All the complexities of their individual identity, their very humanity, disappear in the moment that they undergo the rigid application of a category or label. Usually, this category or label conveniently provides a set of stereotyped information and ideas as well as feelings towards those categorized. In situations like these, 'Othering' proceeds in terms of a single category and completely determines the perception of another person (or group) as absolute 'Other.' If this specific categorization or differentiation, which comes naturally with a certain context, is applied indiscriminately within other contexts, it tends to involve the marginalisation, denigration and stigmatization of the 'Other.' In the frame of this study, the term 'hostile Othering' will be used for processes that result in the perception of other people — familiar and unfamiliar, known and unknown — solely in terms of one or several linked categories with negative, menacing connotations.

## II.4 Religious Alterity, 'Hostile Othering' and Violence

It seems obvious that 'hostile Othering' — from the way it is described above with all the negative implications — sooner rather than later results in some form of violence. But what exactly is the relation between 'hostile Othering' and violence? In fact, I consider 'hostile Othering' what Slavoj Žižek terms "objective violence" while I would categorize the acts of physical and psychological violence as Žižek's "subjective violence," namely "directly visible [...] violence performed by a clearly identifiable agent" (1). Mindful of Žižek's concept of objective violence as well as Galtung's concept of structural violence and in line with the work of scholars like the historian Gyanendra Pandey, who has researched the phenomenon of communal violence in India, I do not consider violence completely anomalous, isolated and exceptional occurrences in human social existence. Instead of classifying instances of violent behaviour as isolated acts or extraordinary events, it is plausible to conceive of violence as a "total social phenomenon" like Pandey does (2006: 7). Pandey, who draws on Marcel Mauss' concept of the

"fait social total" at this point, asserts that "examples of collective violence – and indeed most cases of individual violence – constitute a complex social fact [...] with important religious, economic, political, and moral implications" (2006: 8). If one understands violence in such a socially interrelated, embedded way, the study of this phenomenon must reach beyond the actual violent events, and take into account many other factors such as "the antecedents, the enabling conditions, the cycle of violence that a violent act initiates or continues, the forms that it takes, the wide sections of society that it involves, the consequences that it has both near and far" (Pandey 8). Pandey's most important assessment with regard to this study, however, is his linking up of violence and what I term 'hostile Othering:'

> we must recognize violence not only in its most spectacular, explosive, visible moments, but also in its more disguised forms – in our day-to-day behaviour, the way we construct and respond to neighbours as well as strangers, in the books and magazines we read, the films we see, and the conversations and silences in which we participate (2006: 8).

The qualifier 'religious' in the composite term signifies that 'Othering' occurs in terms of religious affiliation: 'religious Othering' implies that religious alterity is the basis of the stigmatization and marginalization of a section of a community and invested with wide-ranging political and socio-cultural meaning. The qualifier 'hostile' refers to the violent, hostile acts and the suffering from these acts that are either already part of the marginalization process or else significant consequences thereof. Due to this broad understanding of the interdependence of violence and the construction of the 'hostile (religious) Other,' the objects of this study's textual analyses include not only the fictional representations of processes of constructing 'the hostile Other' themselves, but also, firstly, the different renderings of the reasons, pretexts and triggers of 'hostile Othering' (i.e. 'why?') such as religious difference, and, secondly, the various stagings of consequences of 'hostile Othering' (i.e. 'what ensues?') like insults, verbal discriminations, physical violence or even exclusion from a group through extinction.[87]

[87] Naturally, since the fictional representations of all of these issues are closely intertwined, the analyses will not be able to separate them neatly in practise.

# III Context: Religious Alterity and Violence in India

India is home to all existing major religious traditions and many minor ones. And for centuries, India has been the site both of syncretic religious movements and also of violent clashes between different religious communities and sects — be that Hindus, Buddhists, Muslims, Sikhs or Christians. These facts have been pointed out by many scholars working on different aspects of the religions of and in India. In his essay "India's Religious Traditions" the Indian social anthropologist Triloki Nath Madan actually states that he conceives of the "history of India [as] a history of syncretism among religious traditions as well as conflict between religious communities" (2006: 213). A lot of public unrest and violence has occurred which seem to be based on, or at least in some ways linked to, religion — religious symbols, sacred places (e.g. shrines, temples and mosques), holy persons (such as saints or gurus), religious festivities and processions, or other similar instances.

While these are largely undisputed facts, there are many different ways in which they are approached and discussed in different media, by people in academia, by politicians and Indians in general. Depending on political orientation, class or caste, historical context or geographical region and other factors the categorizations and interpretations of the conflicts differ – sometimes in considerable ways. As David Ludden points out any incident can be defined as communal (11). The elopement of a Hindu girl with a Muslim boy sparking a series of violent incidents committed by members of the Hindu family against members of the Muslim family could, for example, be considered a conflict between religious communities. It could, however, also be interpreted as a conflict between two families without religious connotations. It all is a matter of categorization, interpretation and contextualization, and these differ as greatly as do the reasons which different institutions and people consequently give for the occurrence of incidents like the one just described, and others, more complex and extensive ones.

Among the most prevalent and established explanations for the occurrence of violence between religious communities are economic, 'capitalist' motives, political reasons — e.g. if during election periods politicians set the members of what they consider 'their' community against those of others for the sake of uniting them, carrying off their votes and thus winning the struggle for political power — and last but not least, religious alterity — namely that there exist primordial differences between religious communities which render it impossible for them to live together peacefully in the same place under the same laws.

Again, depending on how the conflicts and violent incidents are categorized and interpreted, and which reasons are put forward in order to explain their occurrence, the conclusions drawn from these considerations and the solutions offered to change the situation differ greatly. Obviously, if the violent conflicts between groups of people are assumed to be caused by religious alterity, which is claimed to inevitably make them irreconcilable enemies, the only solutions can be either a definite (e.g. geographical) separation of the two communities or the elimination of the supposedly sole causative factor, i.e. the religious difference. In the case of Hindu-nationalist ideology, this would mean that either the Muslims have to leave India or they all have to adapt the Hindu way of life.

## III.1 Hostile Othering and 'Routine Violence' in India[88]

> The history of India is a history of syncretism among religious traditions as well as conflict between religious communities. (Madan 2006: 213).
>
> The spectre of growing communalism haunts India today. (Vanaik 29)

In India, the phenomenon of 'hostile Othering' on the basis of religious alterity is omnipresent. It has a long history dating back at least to the colonial period, where it was "the divide-and-rule politics of the colonial state that first created religious communities and then set them up against each other."[89] Far from leaving them behind after independence, the Indian state "inherited the divisions in civil society that had been created by the British. Politicians depend on votes, and the electoral process almost forces them to exploit the religious divisions in society" (van der Veer, "Writing Violence," 261). The civil society's dividedness along religious lines, thus consolidated over decades, has resulted in different forms of structural and physical violence which are usually referred to as 'communal' both in public and in academic

[88] Here, as in the whole chapter II, 'India' is broad term that at times refers to different (political and geographical) entities — British India before independence and the Republic of India thereafter. This is due to the chapter's historical perspective which takes into account events set in the days before India's (and Pakistan's) independence – i.e. still in colonial British India – and also events set in the present day Republic of India whose geographical and political characteristics are very different.

[89] Peter Van der Veer, "Writing Violence," 261. In line with van der Veer's assertions David Ludden (1996) points out, "most scholars of India today argue that communal conflict never was caused by the religions of Hinduism and Islam; many agree with [Edward] Said and [Gyanendra] Pandey that as a historical and historiographic phenomenon, communalism is a product of orientalism and the colonial state" (1996: 11).

discourse.[90] These include attacks of individuals against individuals, instances of large-scale violence involving riotous mobs and even systematic pogroms organized by state governments against whole segments of the population solely on the basis of their religious affiliation. As the historian Gyanendra Pandey points out, Indian intellectuals and commentators in the media and in political speeches have long propagated the view that "communal violence (as violence between people belonging to different religiously denominations is called in India)" is "an aberration or a break from normalcy", and prefer to describe it "in terms of the sociological category of the riot" (2006: 14). According to Pandey, representing these instances of violence as aberration results in deflecting "attention away from the way the construction of a normal India sets different populations — the Muslims, and sometimes other communities — against the authentic nation" (ibid.). To apply the term 'riot,' claims Pandey, "makes the violence an event with a closure" (2006: 14). This interpretative act encourages Indian citizens to "forget communal violence because it is episodic and momentary, a closed chapter as soon as it is over" (ibid. 14), and to return to what is propagated as normality, namely the harmonious secularist peace in Indian society.

This assessment of the processes and the importance of interpretive acts is shared by most academics — historians, sociologists, social anthropologists and political scientists — who have dedicated their research to the phenomena of communalism and communal violence.[91] According to them, communal violence, both in its "most spectacular, explosive, visible moments," and also as a structural phenomenon surfacing in "more disguised forms — in our day-to-day behaviour, the way we construct and respond to our neighbours as well as strangers, in the books and magazines we read, the films we see, and the conversations and silences in which we participate" (Pandey 2006: 8), is actually an essential part of most Indian citizens' lives. The escalations of communal violence, then, are nothing less than a symptom, a visible outcome in a way, of the omnipresent "routine violence involved in the construction of naturalized nations, of natural communities and histories, majorities and minorities" (Pandey

[90] Following Peter van der Veer it is important to note, however, that "the interpretation of virtually any act of violence between persons identified as belonging to different groups itself becomes a political act" ("Writing Violence," 265). He points out that "what is recognized as violence and what is then categorized as communal violence is an interpretive act. [...] Communal violence is only communal violence when it is narrativized as such" (ibd.).

[91] On the relevance of the interpretive act in communal politics and the instigation of communal violence see especially Paul Brass' *The Production of Hindu-Muslim Violence in Contemporary India* (2003) and Peter van der Veer's "Writing Violence" (1996).

2006: 8). In India, among these essentialised — and thereby also antagonized — communities are especially those of the Muslims and Hindus, the state's two major religious groups.

## III.2 Religions of India — Religion in India

The geographical region of South Asia is home as well as "long time host" (Madan 1991: 15) to a multiplicity of religions and religious traditions with Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, Zoroastrianism, Christianity and Judaism being but the major traditions.[92] In India, the subcontinent's biggest country both as regards its geographical size and its number of inhabitants, the great majority of the citizens are, or think of themselves as, Hindu. According to the 2001 census of India, the group of people who name Hinduism as their 'religion' comprises about 830 million Indians or 80.5 % of India's citizens.[93]

It has often been stressed that it is a crude simplification to use the term 'Hinduism' when referring to India's indigenous religious traditions, or to think that some kind of homogenous unity called 'Hinduism' actually exists.[94] According to Carl Olson and many other scholars of Hinduism, the term Hinduism and, along with it, the modern concept of the 'world religion' of Hinduism is a "scholarly abstraction created by the West" that was "*imposed* on Indian culture" from the outside (Olson 268). Scientist of religion Richard King, who in his book *Orientalism and Religion* speaks at length of the "modern myth of 'Hinduism'" (1999: 96), describes the term as "a Western-inspired abstraction, which until the nineteenth century bore little or no resemblance to the diversity of Indian religious belief and practice" (ibid. 98).

These findings do *not* imply that the actual phenomena summarized and categorized as Hinduism do not exist. They exist in such a great number and variety that has led scholars such as Julius Lipner to use the symbol of an old "vast, magnificent banyan tree (*ficus benghalensis*)" for describing the configuration of Hinduism: "Like the tree, Hinduism is an ancient collection of roots and branches, many indistinguishable one from the others, microcosmically polycentric, macrocosmically one" (Lipner 5). Irrespective of its pertinency regarding the variety

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[92] On India's various different religious traditions, especially with respect to sociological aspects, see for especially Robert D. Baird's *Religion in Modern India* (ed 1981); Fred W. Clothey's *Religion in India: A Historical Introduction* (2006); Triloki Nath Madan's *Religion in India* (ed. 1991); Rowena Robinson's *Sociology of Religion in India* (2004); and Peter van der Veer's "Religion in South Asia" (2002).

[93] http://www.censusindia.gov.in/Census_Data_2001/Census_Data_Online/Social_and_cultural/Religion.aspx. Accessed November 15th, 2012.

[94] For good introductions to Hinduism see especially Gavin Flood's *The Blackwell Companion to Hinduism* (ed. 2003); Julius Lipner's *Hindus: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices* (1998); and Carl Olson's *The Many Colors of Hinduism: A Thematic-Historical Introduction* (2007).

of phenomena it claims to subsume, the category of Hinduism gained considerable political relevance under British colonial rule, which was an important reason for the indigenous people to accept, internalise and perpetuate this "initial[ly] external process of abstraction" (Olson 268). As King points out, "it is not until the nineteenth century that the term 'Hinduism' became used as a signifier of a unified, all-embracing and independent religious entity in both Western and Indian circles" (1996: 100). By accepting the categorization of their cultural and religious practises and beliefs in terms of 'Hinduism,' the colonized people enabled them to be established and recognized as aspects of a 'proper' religion alongside other 'world religions' such as the Christian religion of the colonizers. In the nineteenth century, the term began to become a crucial "part of a growing national consciousness" (Olson 268) and was finally put to wide ranging political use "as a term of identification" in the struggle for national independence from the British colonial rule (ibid.).

Concerning those Indians who do not belong or do not consider themselves belonging to the amorphous group of Hindu religious traditions, the 2001 census informs its readers that about 140 million or 13,4 % of the population are Muslims.[95] As Madan points out, Islam is "the second most important religion of India" and adds that "there are more Muslims in India now (over 120 million) than in any other country except Indonesia" (2006: 227). The importance of Islam in India results not only from the sheer number of its adherents, however, but also from Islam's contributions to India's history and cultural heritage as well as from the Muslim community's relevance in and for India's politics and civil society today. As regards India's other religions, 24 million or 2,3 % of the population are Christians, 19 million or 1,9 % of India's population are Sikhs, 8 million or 0,9 % of the population are Buddhists, and about 4 million or 0,4 % of India's population are Jains. Zoroastrians (Parsis), Jews and other religious traditions are counted among the category of 'Other' and make up a total of 7 million or 0,6 % of India's citizens.[96] Apart from these major traditions there are, of course, many different sub-traditions and highly divergent manifestations dependent on the geographical regions and social contexts. Not only are there many different religious traditions in South Asia as a whole, it would be a simplification to consider any of these traditions as constituting some

[95] http://www.censusindia.gov.in/Census_Data_2001/Census_Data_Online/Social_and_cultural/Religion.aspx. Accessed November 15th, 2012.

[96] http://www.censusindia.gov.in/Census_Data_2001/Census_Data_Online/Social_and_cultural/Religion.aspx. Accessed November 15th, 2012. Another group of 727'588 citizens did not state any religious affiliation.

homogeneous, monolithic system of beliefs and practices which are shared in equal measure by all who consider themselves as their affiliated members. Rather, each tradition has a great variety of actual manifestations that can only be counted among a larger group of somehow similar or related traditions with the help of the Wittgensteinian theory of family resemblances. These actually include many instances of religious syncretism, which blend elements from what outwardly may appear to be discrete religious traditions.

Obviously, this is true for most if not all religions in the world and the religions and religious traditions of India are no exception here. What is exceptional about India with regard to its religious diversity, however, is the degree to which religion — or, more precisely, the categorization of India's citizens in terms of their religious affiliations — does not only have socio-cultural implications but is of eminent political relevance. Since this thesis analyses fictional renderings of religious alterity and violence in India — colonial, pre-independence British India and the present-day Republic of India — the region's diverse religious landscape plays an important role: the great variety of religious traditions, their history and their present-day relation to each other. As Hinduism and Islam are the two major religious traditions in India, and figure prominently both in the recent history of communal violence and in the fictional texts that thematize religious alterity and violence in India, the relations between these two religious communities are singled out to be looked at in more detail. Two important aspects ruling the relations between religious communities in India are the relative length of time regarding their presence on the subcontinent and their different history of origins.

As Madan's reference to India as "long time host" (1991: 15) indicates, it is common practice to categorize the religious traditions of South Asia as either 'indigenous' or 'imported' ones. Madan (1991, 1997) and other scholars of religion commonly consider Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism and Sikhism as religious traditions that were 'born' or developed from still older, already existing traditions on the Asian subcontinent. Conversely, Christianity, Judaism, Zoroastrianism and Islam are often described as having been imported from outside — religions and religious traditions that were brought to South Asia by traders, immigrants, conquerors and colonizers (Madan 1991: 15-6).

The question of which religious tradition belongs to which category is neither easy to answer nor innocent to ask in the first place. This is not only due to the various and sometimes great influences which some traditions have had on one another in the course of their co-existence over centuries and the resulting numerous mixed forms. Apart from that, the statement that a

certain religious tradition is *not* 'indigenously Indian' often actually implies a disparaging political purpose, being tantamount to the intention of dividing up landscape of India's religious traditions into 'proper' Indian religions and 'improper', 'alien' ones. This manner of categorizing the religions of India and the Indian population accordingly is far from innocent. It is especially consequential in political discourse where religious affiliation is not only associated with questions of national belonging and loyalty but also closely related to both citizenship and vested interests. One important example in this respect is the discourse of Hindu-nationalists, who are eager to present Muslims as the foreign, 'hostile Other' and never tire of stressing the point that Islam was brought to the Indian subcontinent by looting outsiders. From this, they have concluded that 'the Muslims' do not only have a different religion but are really a wholly separate 'nation;' that they do not originally belong to India, have their loyalties somewhere else and should therefore not have the same rights as all those people belonging to Hindu religious traditions. It was the politician and ideologue Madhav Sadashiv Golwalker who in his book *We or Our Nationhood Defined* (1938) first expressed these ideas in the most acrid and unrelenting way:

> [T]he non Hindu people in Hindustan must either adopt the Hindu culture and language, must learn to respect and revere Hindu religion, must entertain no idea but the glorification of the Hindu nation; i.e. they must not only give up their attitude of intolerance and ingratitude towards this land and its age-long traditions, but must also cultivate the positive attitude of love and devotion instead; in one word they must cease to be foreigners or may stay in the country wholly subordinated to the Hindu nation claiming nothing, deserving no privileges, far less any preferential treatment, not even citizen's rights. (52)

Interestingly, the precursors of the idea that Hindus and Muslims not only had different religions but were really two wholly different, mutually exclusive 'nations' were not originally formulated by Hindu-nationalist thinkers even though they proved to be very much in line with their increasingly acrid discourse of religious alterity and belonging. Its beginnings as a political theory can be dated back to the late nineteenth century.[97]

The theory, which soon after its occurrence and dissemination came to be called the *two-nations-theory*, initially only claimed that Hindus and Muslims constituted distinct communities or 'nations' due to their histories and religious traditions, and that this should be taken into

[97] This terminology of the 'Hindu nation' and the whole pseudo-mythological narrative about its age-long traditions, its origins in the prehistoric past and its threatened exclusivity strongly evokes many central ideas within Benedict Anderson's theory of the 'invention' of nations in his famous monograph *Imagined Communities* (1983).

account in terms of political representation and the distribution of political power and rights. The *two-nations-theory* and its wide-ranging consequences date back at least to the times of British colonial rule. The British colonizers are often assigned the major blame for the rise of Hindu-Muslim antagonism in India, and consequently for Partition, because of their introduction of population censuses on the basis of categories such as religion and caste, their politics of numbers based on these census data, and their divide and rule policy.[98] As Madan points out, "the conceptualization of the people of India as quantitatively defined tribes, castes, and religious communities was made possible by [...] the periodic census, begun in 1872 and made into a decennial exercise from 1881" (1997: 252). Around the same time, the idea that Hindus and Muslims constituted not only two separate, homogeneous communities, but in fact "two different nations," often referred to as the *two-nations-theory* ever since, emerged (Madan 1997: 252). Madan refers to a speech made by the Indian politician and Islamic reformer Sayyid Ahmad Khan[99] in Lucknow on 28 December 1887, wherein he presented the thesis that Hindus and Muslims constitute "two different nations" (quoted in Madan 1997: 252). Apart from conceptualizing the Muslims of India as a separate nation within India as opposed to the Hindu nation, he also projected them as an underprivileged minority "threatened by a socially mobile and politically assertive Hindu majority" (Madan 1997: 252). Based on this fear of the Muslim minority being suppressed by the Hindu majority in the politics of numbers, he requested the introduction of "'separate electorates' based on religious identity" (ibid. 253). This *two-nations-theory* was readily adopted and propagated by the All-India Muslim League whose leader Muhammad Ali Jinnah (1913 until independence). Jinnah repeatedly emphasized the status of Muslims "as a 'minority', or as a separate 'nation'" (Madan 1997: 253) and eventually used it to justify the claim for a separate Muslim homeland, insisting that "Muslims and Hindus ... were irreconcilably opposed monolithic religious communities" (Talbot and Singh 33). So in its beginnings, in the decades preceding Partition, the *two-nations-theory* was used by Muslim politicians as major argument in their struggle for adequate political

[98] For detailed discussions of the *two-nations*-theory see especially Bipan Chandra's *Communalism in Modern India* (1984); Triloki Nath Madan's *Modern Myths, Locked Minds. Secularism and Fundamentalism in India* (1997); and Gyanendra Pandey's *Remembering Partition: Violence, Nationalism and History in India* (2001).

[99] Sayyid Ahmad Khan has been referred to as an Indian educator and politician, and an Islamic reformer and modernist. He pioneered modern education for the Muslim community in India by founding the Muhammedan Anglo-Oriental College, which later developed into the Aligarh Muslim University. His work gave rise to a new generation of Muslim intellectuals and politicians who composed the Aligarh movement to secure the political future of Muslims in India.

representation mindful of their status as minority community within British India. Soon after its appearance in the political arena, however, it was readily taken up and transformed by politicians from different factions and affiliations, especially by Hindu-nationalists.

As the struggle for independence from the British colonizers gained ground and the questions of the just and adequate distribution of political power in the independent state of India that was about to be created were debated with increasing urgency, the theory also transformed. Around independence, the theory's proponents, who included both Hindu and Muslim politicians, claimed that Hindus and Muslims were so essentially different in every conceivable sense and incompatible in their respective ways of live that they cannot and should not be forced to live together in the same state governed by the same laws. At that point, the *two-nations-theory* effectively sidelined all other ways in which individuals may develop a sense of belonging to a certain geographical region or identify with different groups of people. Instead, the theory's supporters from different political factions assigned religious affiliation the utmost importance concerning all questions of any person's identification with a set of ideas, their allegiance to groups, and their actual belonging. It was this *two-nations-theory* which formed a major argument in debates preceding the partition of British India and helped bring about the founding of two separate states on the basis of religious alterity.

Even though they usually accentuated different aspects and provided alternative solutions, many politicians of different colours agreed with the general idea and focused on the issue of the political relevance of religious alterity.

> Few people now cared to differentiate carefully among the Muslims of India. The regional, caste, and occupational markers by which generations of Muslims had been known — and privileged, denigrated, or even declared to be only half-Muslims — seemed to lose much of their significance. The Muslims were now increasingly — in official documents, journalism, and common conversation — simply Muslims, and all of them were suspect as open or closet Pakistanis. [...] The undifferentiated category "Muslims" had been too greatly invoked in the Muslim League's demand for Pakistan. (Pandey 2006: 137)

Thus, when Partition drew near, neat categories of Muslim and Hindu had been existent in both political and public discourse for a long time. They had been instilled in many people's minds as relating to real entities, ignoring the plurality of other differentiations and identifications of individuals with respect to many aspects of social existence which had been valid earlier. There has been and still continues to be produced a lot of research on all the reasons why India was eventually partitioned, why all efforts of several groups and individuals from different political and ideological proveniences failed to prevent it.

## III.3 Divisive Religions: The Partition of British India

The fact remains that on 15 August 1947, what had been colonial British India until then was divided into two independent nation-states — India and Pakistan. The partition of the country was decided upon and conducted on behalf of what was claimed to be the expressed, unanimous and natural wish of the sub-continent's inhabitants, i.e. the social, legal and spatial federation of all those belonging to their respective religious groups. After having been sketched out on paper by Indian politicians and representatives of the colonial powers who were about to quit India, the two new states and their concomitant borders eventually came true.[100]

British India's independence also resulted in the end of Britain's paramountcy over the princely states,[101] the largest of which was the state of Jammu and Kashmir governed by the Hindu Maharaja Hari Singh. Based on the region's history and the composition of its population in terms of religions, both India and Pakistan have claimed the Kashmir valley: Despite having a Hindu ruler, the princely state's population predominantly comprised Muslims, namely roughly 76% according to the 1941 census, while the Pandits — i.e. Kashmiri Brahmins — only made up 20% of the population.[102] This ratio was even more pronounced in

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[100] For a comprehensive as well as in-depth discussion of the history of Partition see Ian Talbot and Gurharpal Singh's *The Partition of India* (2009). The continuously growing corpus of scholarly work on Partition and its different aspects include: Kamla Bhasin and Ritu Menon's *Borders and Boundaries. Women in India's Partition* (1998); Urvashi Butalia's *The Other Side of Silence: Voices from the Partition of India* (1998), Mushirul Hasan's *Inventing Boundaries: Gender, Politics and the Partition of India India's Partition: Process, Strategy and Mobilization* (ed. 2000) and (ed. 2002), Jasbir Jain's *Reading Partition, Living Partition* (2007), David Page, Anita Inder Singh, Penderel Moon and G.D. Khoshla's *The Partition Omnibus* (eds. 2002), Gyanendra Pandey's *Remembering Partition* (2001); and Tai Yong Tan and Gyanesh Kudaisya's *The Aftermath of Partition in South Asia* (2000) and *Partition and Post-colonial South Asia: A Reader* (eds. 2008, 3 vols.).

[101] A princely state was a nominally sovereign entity of the British Indian Empire that was governed by an Indian ruler under a form of indirect rule, subject to a subsidiary alliance and the paramountcy of the British crown. See Barbara Ramusack's *The Indian Princes and their States* (2004).

[102] J. E. Brush. 1949. "The Distribution of Religious Communities in India." *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 39. 2: 83. The fact that most of Kashmir's native Hindus, at least as late as "towards the end of the nineteenth century [...] happened to be a single community of Brahmans" (Madan 2006: 182), has been attributed to "large-scale conversions to Islam, for the Brahmans must have been here as elsewhere a superior category within an internally heterogeneous social order" (Madan 2006: 182). The conversion of nearly all members of the other castes to Islam is assumed to have begun during the firm establishment of Muslim rule in the valley in the thirteenth century, and especially as a result of the anti-Hindu rule of Shah Sikander (1389-1413). Different from both his predecessors and successors, Sikander "resorted to coercion and persecution" with regard to the Hindu population" (Madan 2006: 182). His display of "enormous enthusiasm for the destruction of Hindu temples, which won him the sobriquet of *butshikan*, idolbreaker," the imposition of "punitive taxes on the Hindus" and the ban on "many religious practices and ceremonies" resulted in "large-scale

the Kashmir valley where according to the 1901 census the Muslims made up 94% of the population,[103] a percentage which has even risen until today. Only the Jammu and Ladakh regions had and still have Hindu and Buddhist majorities respectively.[104] In geographical and legal terms, the Maharaja of Kashmir could have chosen to join either India or Pakistan or remain independent but he hesitated to take a decision. In October 1947, incursions by Pakistan lead to a war resulting in today's situation where the state of Jammu and Kashmir remains divided between the two countries. Two-thirds of the former princely state, comprising the Kashmir Valley, Jammu and the sparsely populated Buddhist area of Ladakh, are controlled by India; one-third is administered by Pakistan. The dispute over the Indian-administered Jammu and Kashmir with its overwhelming Muslim majority remains unsolved until today, despite repeated attempts at solving it through political discussions. It has resulted in continual international tensions and even wars resulting in thousands of deaths.[105]

The dispute over Kashmir and other developments show what has been pointed out in many recent publications, namely that British India's partition and independence did not only result in the creation of the new nation-states of India and Pakistan; the two 'events' also constituted what historian Gyanendra Pandey calls "the moment of the congealing of new identities, relations, and histories, or of their being thrown into question once again" (2006: 133-4). Furthermore, the partitioning of the former colony of British India into two separate states was accompanied by what is today referred to as 'the horrors of partition.' Several million people had to leave their homes and cross the newly created borders in both directions to settle on religiously 'proper' soil:

> Practically the entire minority population of certain areas was driven out: Hindus and Sikhs from the West Pakistan territories [what is Pakistan today] and Muslims from East Punjab and several neighbouring tracts in India, as well as Muslims and Hindus from the two halves of Bengal [...]. (Pandey 2006: 134)

These mass migrations were accompanied by atrocities committed against individuals and whole groups of people solely on the basis of their being affiliated to different religious

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conversions" and the migration of "some Hindus (mainly Brahmans) [...] out of the Valley" (Madan 2006: 182).

[103] *Imperial Gazetteer of India* 15, 1908: 99.

[104] According to the 2001 census of India, Hindus make up about 66% of Jammu's population and Buddhists constitute 50% of the Ladakh's inhabitants. See web: *Census of India*, http://www.censusindia.net/census_online/population.html, accessed 13 December 2012.

[105] At least three wars have been fought so far, including the Indo-Pakistani Wars of 1947, 1965 and 1999.

communities categorised as hostile and dangerous 'Other'. As Pandey asserts, "the 'truth' of the partition of the Indian subcontinent in 1947 lay, at least for its victims, in the violence done to them" (1997: 2037) – violence done to them due to their respective communal identities being either Muslim, Hindu or Sikh. The grim and excessive violence lasted for months and left hundreds of thousands of people dead or traumatized by rape, mutilation and loss: "Incalculable numbers were uprooted, murdered, maimed, looted, raped, and abducted" (Pandey 2006: 134). According to common estimates, "half a million or more people killed and twelve to fourteen million driven out and transformed into refugees" (Pandey 2006: 134). The violence that was committed against individuals and whole groups of people solely on the grounds of their assumed or actual belonging to a certain religious community seems to have known no bounds.

> Partition was, for the majority of people living in what are now the divided territories of northern India and Pakistan, *the* event of the twentieth century – equivalent in terms of trauma and consequence to World War I (the "Great War") for Britain or World War II for France and Japan. (Pandey 2006: 21)

Another aspect of Partition that has long been sidelined is that of gender. In her essay about women in Partition fiction, Ananya Kabir claims that "at least seventy-five thousand women [were] raped and abandoned." (2005: 178) Kabir points out that the details, figures, and stories with especial regard to the violence committed to women "have only recently begun to enter the public domain" (2005: 178). Thanks to publications that began appearing only in the 1990s, the gendered dimension of Partition violence finally began to be brought to light. Among the researchers who did ground breaking research in this field long governed by silence are the social anthropologists Urvashi Butali (*The Other Side of Silence: Voices from the Partition of India*, 1998) and Veena Das (*Critical Events. An Anthropological Perspective on Contemporary India*, 1995) as well as the feminist writers Kamla Bhasin and Ritu Menon (*Borders and Boundaries. Women in India's Partition*, 1998).

The sheer enormity of the events and their unchanged presence in the collective memory of the inhabitants of Indian sub-continent is mirrored in the way they are frequently referred to in public discourse on communal violence today.

> It became routine in the India of the 1980s and 1990s to describe one instance of strife and then another as "perhaps the worst since 1947," such was the magnitude and brutality of sectarian violence of the period. (Pandey 2006: 24)

The scope of the events before, during and after Partition, and their wide-ranging consequences today, are hardly known outside the sub-continent. Most historical accounts of India by non-Indian scholars relegate the Partition violence to the realm of footnotes to what is commonly presented as the more relevant and at the same time more memorable event, namely the birth of the two nation states of India and Pakistan newly independent from colonial rule. What is even more astounding, however, is that while accounts of and references to Partition violence are not wholly absent from history books and public discourse in India, there is a striking lack of detailed accounts of individual experiences. Stories of Partition violence exist only in a standardized, officially sanctioned form whereas the recording of individual memories and stories of atrocious violence are suppressed, even censored. Furthermore, in the standardized versions of the events these are presented as a kind of deplorable collateral damage which is outshone by far by the bitterly fought and longed for Independence and the birth of the Indian (or Pakistani) nation state. As Peter van der Veer points out, the "dark stories of terror and bloodshed are only memorized to be interpreted as either necessary steps toward liberation or 'incidents' that might as well be forgotten" ("Writing Violence," 250-51). Pandey draws a similar picture when he claims that

> with the emphasis placed on the unity of India and the unity of the struggle to realize its independence […] the story of Partition, and the Hindu-Muslim and Muslim-Sikh violence that made it what it was, has been given short rift. The history of sectarian strife, and of what is called communalism in India, has been written up as a secondary story, entirely subsidiary to the main drama of India's struggle for independence from colonial rule. (2006: 19)

Many scholars like Pandey and van der Veer have pointed out that the violence at the time of Partition is being treated as "*aberration* [...] in the sense that violence is seen as removed from the general run of Indian history: a distorted form, an exceptional moment, not the real history of India at all" (Pandey 2006: 17). Furthermore, Partition violence has also been claimed to appear "as an *absence* [...] because historical discourse has been able to capture and represent the moment of physical or psychological violation only with great difficulty" (Pandey 2006: 17). Pandey speaks of an "erasure of memory" (21) and the common practice of "collective amnesia" (23) with regard to what was has been called a singularly traumatic period for a multitude of people living in the Indian sub-continent.

> There has been no movement for the establishment of a Partition archive, in spite of several individual efforts to collect memories, documents, and photographs; no movement for acknowledgement of collective guilt; no expression of regret or shame at any organized official or unofficial level. [...] As in history writing, so in films and fiction, Indian

> intellectuals tended for a long time to celebrate the story of the Independence struggle rather than dwell on the anguish of Partition. (Pandey 2006: 21-2)

Commenting on the reasons for turning away from and silencing accounts of "the ugliness of Hindu-Muslim violence," Pandey suggests that this was mainly due to the fact that "differences and strife between Hindus and Muslims persisted in India after Independence" (ibid. 21): "[I]n relating the history of such strife there was always the danger of reopening old wounds" (ibid.). As a consequence, for the large majority of Indian citizens the individual experiences of the 'horrors of Partition' remain a taboo topic with regard to the public sphere. As van der Veer points out, "it is not so much that their memory is totally obliterated, that they are repressed, but that they are memorized as fragments of a story of which the unitary, rational subject is the liberal nation-state" ("Writing Violence," 251).

The individual, idiosyncratic memories, however, would be subversive and disruptive with respect to the idealized national harmony as they put into question the belief in its existence. These memories and the feelings that accompany them are something which may be discussed only in private, among close friends and family members — or, as Pandey (2006: 22-3), social anthropologist Urvashi Butalia (1999) and many literary scholars such as Allok Bhalla and Mushirul Hasan have repeatedly pointed out, something which has preferably been relegated to the realm of fiction. Especially around the fiftieth anniversary of India's independence and the partition of British India, there has been a considerable output of what has come to be called 'narratives of Partition' or 'Partition literature'. Only recently, there has been an increasing interest in Partition and Partition violence, and the treatment of the topics in academic and public discourse, also in the academia.[106]

As regards the history of Partition and its significance for India's struggle with conflicts between religious communities and religiously connoted violence today, there are — among many others — three extensively debated questions: Firstly, which were and are the reasons for the occurrence of tensions and violent clashes between religious communities? Secondly, how deeply entrenched and widespread is the belief among Indian citizens that there is such a thing as an essential violent antagonism between Muslim and Hindu communities which necessarily resulted in Partition violence and is at the root of communal violence today? Thirdly, which role did and does religion play in these violent conflicts then and now? And fourthly, which

[106] One of these initiatives is the Indian Subcontinent Partition Documentation (ISPaD) project based in New York City.

solutions are there to these conflicts? This thesis is not the place to answer these questions. Rather, they point out very clearly, how intensely connected the large-scale violence during Partition is to contemporary occurrences of what is usually called Hindu-Muslim 'riots' or 'communal violence.' This link does not only exist as regards the memories of individuals but also regarding the highly standardized references to these memories in many areas of public discourse. Instead of a thorough working through of the experiences of the past and a detailed analysis of both collective and individual traumata, Partition has been categorised as a deplorable mistake and the atrocities committed during Partition have been interpreted in terms of inexplicable aberrations.

At the same time, one of the most important reasons for the occurrence of that 'mistake' and the 'aberrations' was identified. It has commonly been assumed that it was primarily the interference of religious issues with state policies which had brought about the insurmountable tensions between religious communities, the sectarian feelings and violent conflicts which needed to be prevented in the future. For Jawarhalal Nehru, India's first president, for example, "religiosity and the attendant conflicts were the badge of social backwardness" while "secularism in the sense of neutrality [towards different religions] as state policy was a strategy to cope with a difficult situation" (Madan 1997: 246). The prevention strategy to achieve the goal of societal harmony until today essentially contains, among others, two elements: the suppression of detailed, idiosyncratic, non-standardized discussions of Partition and present-day communal violence on the one hand and the enforcement of a collective commitment to the state ideology of secularism on the other hand.

## III.4 Side-lining Religions: Secularism in India

In contemporary India, 'secularism' refers to the ideal of the impartiality or even detachedness of the Indian state in all matters concerning religion, religious affiliation and religious groups.[107] It is one of the central pillars of India's constitution. In this as in many other respects the Indian constitution resounds with echoes of the state's recent colonial past.

[107] On the theory and practice of secularism in India – with special focus on the discourse and practice of religious alterity and communalism – see Paul Brass' "Indian Secularism in Practice" (2005), Triloki Nath Madan's "Secularism in its Place" (1987) and *Modern Myths, Locked Minds. Secularism and Fundamentalism in India* (1997), Ashis Nandy's "The Politics of Secularism and the Recovery of Religious Tolerance" (1990) and "The Twilight of Certitudes: Secularism, Hindu Nationalism and Other Masks of Deculturation" (1999), Andeep Shastri's "Secularism, Fundamentalism and Communalism: An Attempt at Understanding the Indian Experience" (1994) and Achin Vanaik's *The Furies of Indian Communalism: Religion, Modernity, and Secularization* (1997).

Likewise, it contains numerous reminders of the fact that the Republic of India's 'birth' as independent state turned out to be intrinsically tied to the partition of British India along religious lines. Many scholars have pointed out the influence of the large scale violence during Partition — assumedly solely implemented on the basis of religious affiliation — on the Indian constitution's stance towards religions and the relation between religious and political sphere:

> [I]n the aftermath of the riots that accompanied the Partition, there was great anxiety that giving any cause for communal discontent against the state would leave room for another bloodbath. What Partition did was to underscore the idea that religion was a primitive and dangerous beast that must be leashed for the social good. (Rajagopalan 242)

In its Articles 25 to 28, which belong to the "Fundamental Rights" section, the Indian constitution spells out the constitutional and legal details of the "*Right to Freedom of Religion*": Article 25 declares that "[s]ubject to public order, morality and health and to the other provisions of this Part, all persons are equally entitled to freedom of conscience and the right freely to profess, practise and propagate religion" and Article 26 guarantees that "every religious denomination or any section thereof shall have the right — (a) to establish and maintain institutions for religious and charitable purposes; (b) to manage its own affairs in matters of religion; (c) to own and acquire movable and immovable property; and (d) to administer such property in accordance with law."[108] Article 25 includes an important restriction, however, stating that "nothing in this article [25] shall affect the operation of any existing law or prevent the State from making any law [...] regulating or restricting any economic, financial, political or other secular activity which may be associated with religious practice" (ibid.). This amendment implies that the secular or religious character of an affair is far from self-evident and that it is eventually up to the state to decide if some activity — even if it is religiously connoted — is secular and thus falls under the jurisdiction of the state. Hence, the state can, but it does not need to, meddle with affairs assignable to both the secular and the religious sphere. The decision of treating an affair as belonging to the religious sphere tends to be politically highly controversial because it means that the state announces its renunciation of responsibility concerning the affairs in question.

As outlined earlier, the Indian sub-continent is home to a great number of different religious traditions; at the same time, religion and religious practises are commonly considered to

[108] See the unabridged excerpt of the section "*Right to Freedom of Religion*" from the constitution of India, i.e. its Articles 25-28, in Appendix 1 of this chapter. http://lawmin.nic.in/coi/coiason29july08.pdf. Accessed and downloaded on September 5th, 2010.

constitute an integral part of every-day life of human existence for the majority of the inhabitants of South Asian countries. This also applies to India and its population to a high degree. Many scholars working on religion in India have pointed out this fact, among them anthropologist Triloki N. Madan who states that "a distinctive feature of the overall ethos of India is that religion here influences all aspects of society."[109] While scholars of different fields have often conceived of religion and religious practices as separate spheres which may be studied in isolation from other spheres and aspects of social life for the sake of facilitating the analysis of different social and cultural phenomena, such a neat separation hardly exists in 'real,' every-day life. This reductive and essentialist approach to doing research on socio-cultural phenomena is increasingly considered as inadequate and short-sighted as more and more scholars feel that it cannot do justice to the actual interconnectedness of those different phenomena and the implications of their interactions. This criticism has been voiced with regard to research on Western European societies, Christian by the majority. In Western European societies, the rigid distinction between secular and religious aspects of human existence has been cherished and promoted at least theoretically and publicly since the age of Enlightenment.

The proclamation of such a distinction between the religious sphere and other spheres of life, including the political one, has a much shorter history in India, dating back to the beginnings of British colonial rule. The criticism against the conceptual isolation of the religious sphere form other spheres of life by scholars is therefore certainly equally valid in the case of research on different aspects of Indian society and cultures: According to Madan, who is anything but an isolated voice in this respect, similar ways of conceiving the every-day world may be found among most parts of the South Asian population irrespective of their religion: "Neither India's indigenous religious traditions [implying Hinduism, Sikkhism, Buddhism and Jainaism] nor Islam recognize the sacred-secular dichotomy in the manner Christianity does so."[110] Madan, who in his research concentrates on the history and dynamics of conflicts

[109] Madan 1991: 16. The underlying assumption that Indian society and culture is principally more spiritual or more religious than Western European societies and cultures is, even though widely hold, a contested one. See for example Richard King's discussion of this 'myth,' its origins and manifestations in *Orientalism and Religion* (1999). The definitions of what 'religion' or the 'secular' is, and also the ideas of how these two realms are linked or if they are considered as separate realms at all, differ considerably across cultures and societies.

[110] Madan 1997: 261. While Madan's suggestion that "Christianity" or rather Christian societies have actually succeeded in implementing this neat separation is debatable, it is certainly true that the

between Hindus and Muslims in India, points out that "to write about religion in India without querying the notion of religion as a discrete element of everyday life is to yield to the temptation of words" (2006: 211). He negates the notion that "the religious domain is not distinguished from the secular," and argues instead that "the secular is regarded as encompassed by the religious [...] and not independent of it. [...] religion in indigenous cultures is believed to be the foundation of society, and the traditional vision of life is holistic" (ibid. 211-12).

Many scholars have argued that the strategy to consider religious issues as separate from all social, political, economic aspects and spheres of life is not only artificial but even a dangerously weak and inadequate policy in view of the Indian subcontinent's history, the structure of its civil society and its body politic based as it is not only on categories like caste, class and language, but also, and very importantly so, on religious affiliation, and the Indian population's ongoing struggle with tensions and conflicts related to religion. In his study *The Furies of Indian Communalism: Religion, Modernity, and Secularization* (1996), Achin Vanaik has pointed to the inadequacy of India's secularism especially with regard to its population's religious composition:

> Notwithstanding the problems of precise definition, the term 'secular' does possess an agreed meaning: state neutrality with regard to religion. In multi-religious India, this can mean either a fundamental separation of the state from religious activity and affiliation, or impartial state involvement on issues relating to the religious interests of different communities. In practice, 'Indian secularism' has been a mixture of the two: an unsatisfactory attempt to reconcile essentially incompatible approaches. (Vanaik 29)

Madan goes even further when he claims that the omnipresence of hostile communal discourse and the regular occurrences of communal violence are proof of the fact that the kind of 'anti-religious' secularism as it is put forward in the Indian constitution and as it has been propagated and practiced by India's governments since independence, has created the dilemma that "the state in India has become increasingly ineffective in coping with caste and communal violence."[111] Similar assessments have been made with regard to the phenomenon of Hindu-

dichotomy has been propagated as ideal throughout most Christian societies in Western Europe since Enlightenment.

[111] Madan 1997: 263. Instead of arguing for the abolishment of secularism, however, Madan thinks that it should be possible to "find support for its [India's] evolving the notion of secularism as inter-religious understanding." His idea is to "substitute a clearly defined religious pluralism for the narrow secularism and also to further explore India's cultural traditions for suitable ideas." He argues that it has not always been merely or even primarily the differences which characterize the relationships between the different religious traditions and communities of India: "Considerable ethnographic and historical evidence bears witness to cultural exchanges, shared value-orientations, and compatible lifestyles evolved over centuries" (1997: 262).

nationalism, which involves a deft 'religionization' of politics and, simultaneously, a politicization of religion.

## III.5 Politicising Religions: Ideology and Politics of Hindu-nationalism[112]

Since the rise of the Hindu-nationalists to power in the early 1980s, anti-Muslim discourse has become omnipresent and increasingly acrid in the Indian public sphere: Arguing along the lines of religious alterity, especially in terms of a Hindu-Muslim-antagonism, constitutes an essential feature of the ideology of Hindu-nationalism. The Hindu-nationalist movements, which scientist of religion Karénina Kollmar-Paulenz categorizes as "a political religion (on the ideological level)" because it is strongly based "on concepts of nation and culture that are religionised" and as "communalism (on the actor's level)" (13), promote the idea of a unitary Hindu identity and an opposing, hostile Muslim identity. The contemporary usage and contextualisation of terms like Hindu, Hinduism and Hindutva ('Hinduness') by Hindu-nationalists or else in the political sphere in general is tightly linked to the significance it used to have in the construction of an Indian national identity during the struggle for *swaraj* (self-rule) which gathered momentum in the nineteenth century and came into full swing in the early twentieth century. The process of essentialisation, which has taken place with regard to the terms Hindu and Hinduism, is an important factor in the complex dynamics of contemporary ethno-religious conflict in India. As was pointed out earlier, it is a common argument that colonial rule and discourse are at least partially at the root of contemporary India's struggle with wide ranging and sometimes severe communal conflicts.

What makes the concept of Hinduism such a useful tool in the hands of Hindu extremists, is primarily its power of defining the identity of a supposedly homogenous group and, along

[112] The corpus of studies on the history and the different aspects of Hindu-nationalism is huge and constantly growing. Among the most influential texts are the following: Tapan Basu's *Khaki Shorts and Saffron Flags: A Critique of the Hindu Right* (ed. 1993); Chetan Bhatt's *Hindu Nationalism: Origins, Ideologies, and Modern Myths* (2001); C.J. Fuller's *The Camphor Flame. Popular Hinduism and Society in India* (1992); Thomas Blom Hansen's *The Saffron Wave. Democracy and Hindu Nationalism in Modern India* (1999); Christophe Jaffrelot's *The Hindu Nationalist Movement in India* (1996) and *Hindu nationalism: A Reader* (ed. 2007); Karénina Kollmar-Paulenz' "The Ideology of the Hindu Right: Political Religion, Fundamentalism or Communalism?" (2007); David Ludden's *Contesting the Nation: Religion, Community, and the Politics of Democracy in India* (ed. 1996), Arvind Sharma's "On Hindu, Hindustan and Hindutva" (2002); many writings by Peter van der Veer, e.g. *Religious Nationalism. Hindus and Muslims in South Asia* (1994), "Riots and Rituals: The Construction of Violence and Public Space in Hindu Nationalism" (1996) and "Riots and Rituals: The Construction of Violence and Public Space in Hindu Nationalism" "Hindus: A Superior Race" (1999); and John Zavos' *The Emergence of Hindu Nationalism in India* (2000).

with it, the absolute, alien 'Other' of this group — the Muslim. The concept of 'Hinduness' or 'Hindutva' is nearly as debated as the notion of a Hindu collective identity. Pandey describes how the seemingly unambiguous term Hindu had a plethora of possible meanings in the colonial time — sometimes designating all the people living in India, sometimes only those of a particular religious tradition or a set of traditions. And he goes on to stress that "if the Hindu was a puzzle for the colonial official, it was in many ways a problematic category for the Hindu propagandist too" (2006: 111). This was still true "at the turn of the twentieth century, when there was still much uncertainty about the collectivity called the Hindu community, and many different meanings still attached to the term *Hindu*" (2006: 111). And it is true even today, although for most Hindu nationalists the notion is clearly based on what they consider as the Hindu religions. These notions combined with ethnic aspects are asserted to form an essentialised and at the same time all-embracing idea of who is a 'Hindu' — no matter if they be Hindus, Buddhists, Jains, or Sikhs. Outside academic publications, there are countless literary examples that very poignantly describe the vagueness of the concept of 'Hindu(-ness)' and its proneness to misunderstandings. The following is an excerpt from a dispute between Indian villagers taken from the novel *No God in Sight* (2006) by Altaf Tyrewala:

> 'You eunuch! Sixer! Go attack real outsiders!' Babua stood rubbing his head. He argued petulantly, 'This Zail Singh is not from our village. He has a beard. He is outsider. He is!' The Mahant hollered, 'Sixer! He is Sikh. Not outsider! Sikh is Hindu!' Zail Singh heaved and got to his feet. 'Oye, I'm not Hindu, I'm Sikh, not Hindu, and I'm going back to Karnala right now.' (45)

This short scene illustrates succinctly the deceptive quality of the label 'Hindu', seemingly bringing certainty to complex situations but actually confusing matters even more. So although the term 'Hindu' is omnipresent in most if not all kinds of discourse in present-day India, it always seems to be accompanied with a need to specify, to explain its actual meaning. This is even the case in the text of the Indian constitution, which uses the term, for example in its section "Right to Freedom of Religion", but also includes an explanatory phrase to specify what is actually meant by "Hindus".

> Explanation II.—In sub-clause (b) of clause (2), the reference to Hindus shall be construed as including a reference to persons professing the Sikh, Jaina or Buddhist religion, and the reference to Hindu religious institutions shall be construed accordingly.[113]

[113] See the unabridged excerpt of the section "*Right to Freedom of Religion*" in Appendix 1 of this chapter. http://lawmin.nic.in/coi/coiason29july08.pdf. Downloaded on September 15th, 2010.

Irrespective of the words and regulations contained in the Indian constitution of 1947, the Hindu-nationalists' idea began to take shape towards the end of the nineteenth century and was first expressed in detail in the Mahasabha-leader[114] V.D. Savarkar's *Hindutva–Who is a Hindu?* published in 1923. Savarkar's text, "which is totalitarian in relation to those forcibly grouped together as 'We Hindus', and exclusivist towards those stigmatized as the spiritually alienated 'Others'" such as, especially, the Muslims, has "acquired the undisputed status of the manifesto of Hindu fundamentalism" today (Madan 1997: 220). Following Savarkar while expanding as well as transforming some of his ideas, Hindu-nationalist ideologues have been constructing the image of the Muslim community as the hostile 'Other' and have projected the Muslim minority in India as posing an existential threat to cultural and religious community of Hindus as a whole. Savarkar's most renowned successor as regards the articulation of Hindu-nationalist ideology was Madhav Sadashiv Golwalkar, who in 1940 became the leader of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh ('the national organization of volunteers, RSS), an organization which had been founded in 1925 "for the protection of Hindu culture."[115] In line with Savarkar, Golwalkar "requests religious minorities to pledge allegiance to Hindu symbols of identity, assuming that these epitomise Indian national identity: Indian identity is equated with Hindu culture, and religious minorities are enjoined to keep expressions of community particularism to the private sphere" (Jaffrelot ed., 2007: 97). In his book *We or Our Nationhood Defined* (1939), Golwalkar actually terms those who belong to these minorities, as well as foreigners — namely "those who do not subscribe to the social laws dictated by the Hindu Religion and Culture" — as "*mlecchas* (barbarians)" (46).

Referring back to the *two-nations-theory* and as a mirroring response to the fear articulated by proponents of the Muslim League before Independence that the Muslim minority would be terrorized by the Hindu majority, Hindu-nationalists have been increasingly propagating the

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[114] The Hindu Mahasabha was a "Hindu political party, distinct from the Hindu dominated Indian National Congress" which was established in 1915 and "began with a modest agenda of the protection of specifically Hindu interests (most notably, cow protection and the promotion of Hindi and the Devanagari script)" (Madan 1997: 218).

[115] Madan 1997: 221. By today, the RSS has grown into the most significant Hindu nationalist paramilitary group, which not only provides hundreds of thousands of volunteers in case of political agitations and mobilizations, but which also established numerous schools, charities and clubs to propagate its ideology. For more details on the RSS see especially Tapan Basu's *Khaki Shorts and Saffron Flags: A Critique of the Hindu Right* (ed. 1993); D.R. Goyal' *Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh* (1979); Thomas Blom Hansen's *The Saffron Wave. Democracy and Hindu Nationalism in Modern India* (1999); Christophe Jaffrelot's *The Hindu Nationalist Movement in India* (1996); and Arvind Sharma's "On Hindu, Hindustan and Hindutva" (2002).

spectre of minoritarianism, the unrightful rule of a belligerent, oppressive (Muslim) minority over the peaceful, tolerant (Hindu) majority. An assertion often put forward by Hindu-nationalists concerns the supposed appeasement of Muslims by the Indian state — i.e. that Muslims are un-rightful beneficiaries of 'positive discrimination' and favored with too many legal exceptions, too lenient laws, redistributive policies, compensatory reservation policies. The presence and acridity of Hindu-nationalist discourse have increased considerably since the rise to power of the Hindu-nationalists in the early 1980s.

According to David Ludden, an important "reason for the persistence of Hindu nationalism as a force in Indian political life lies in the fact that its basic tenets have been deployed many times to explain why Hindu-Muslim antagonism — and thus communalism — is morally correct, inevitable, necessary, and even progressive" (14). Ludden points out that these "ideas circulate widely and freely in the public domain" and that they "have acquired a common sense quality by their institutionalized repetition in textbooks, museum exhibitions, journalism, scholarship, and other media" (Ludden 14). Peter van der Veer argues in a similar vein when he claims that the most dangerous influence of Hindu-nationalist organizations such as the VHP and the BJP is their perpetuation and naturalization of the ideas of Hindu-Muslim antagonism. One of the results of this climate wherein the antagonism between 'the Hindus' and 'the Muslims' has taken on a nearly natural law, is a considerably increase in the number, scope and severity of occurrences of conflicts and violent clashes between Hindus and Muslims, which are generally categorized as 'riots' or 'communal' violence.

Many scholars like Paul Brass, David Ludden, Triloki N. Madan, and Peter van der Veer have argued that these phenomena existed before even if they were not, or not as frequently, referred to as 'communal.' The question of categorization is not an innocent one. It has been pointed out by Brass, Ludden, Madan, van der Veer and other scholars that it is primarily a matter of interpretation if an event is referred to as '*communal* conflict' or simply as 'conflict'. This politics of categorization or definition is itself an essential element of communalism as the definition of an event as 'communal': firstly, because it considerably influences the way the event (and its participants) is represented and interpreted in the media and by politicians, and secondly because it increases the public awareness of the existence of the problem of communal violence. While van der Veer notes that Hindu-nationalist organizations are often "directly responsible for the widespread killings," he stresses that "their more fundamental impact is that the general narrative of Hindu-Muslim relations in India is perhaps not drastically changed, but

has become more and more acceptable for public expression in wide sections of the Hindu population" (van der Veer "Writing Violence," 268). It is equally important, however, to take into account Thomas Blom Hansen's point that "communal identities are not just effects of poisoning of the people by manipulators or criminals" (203). Instead, he contends,

> they are widely existing forms of subjectivity, based on broadly disseminated forms of knowledge of the other community, often originating in nationalist discourses of an earlier epoch, and amplified by the everyday forms of mutual misrecognition and suspicion that characterize the coexistence of Hindus and Muslims, as well as of caste groups, in so many places in contemporary India. (Hansen 203)

Hansen's assessments point to the circumstance that Hindu-nationalists, even though they draw on, amplify and use these "broadly disseminated forms of knowledge of the other community" for political purposes, they did not invent them. These forms of knowledge which today have crystallised into the ideology and practice of communalism actually predate modern Hindu-nationalist thought, which only came into being in the early 1920s.

## III.6 Hostile Religions: On the Discourse and Practice of Communalism[116]

The term 'communalism' is commonly used when sectarian strife in the South Asian context, especially in India, is discussed. Ornit Shani, who provides an excellent introduction to the existent perspectives and aspects of scholarly discussion of communalism, identifies two

[116] There exists a huge and continuously growing corpus of literature on communalism and communal violence which obviously cannot be included or even discussed here. The texts which this section is primarily based on include the following: Paul Brass' *Riots and Pogroms* (ed. 1996) and *he Production of Hindu-Muslim Violence in Contemporary India* (2003), B. Chakrabarty's *Communal Identity in India: Its Construction and Articulation in the Twentieth Century* (ed. 2003), Bipan Chandra's *Communalism in Modern India* (1984); Veena Das' "Introduction: Communities, Riots, Survivors — The South Asian Experience" (1990); Sandria B. Freitag's "Contesting in Public: Colonial Legacies and Contemporary Communalism" (1996); Sudhir Kakar's *The Colours of Violence: Cultural Identities, Religion, and Conflict* (1996); Cynthia Keppley Mahmood's "Rethinking Indian Communalism. Culture and Counter-Culture" (1993); Atul Kohli and Amrita Basu's *Community Conflicts and the State in India* (eds. 2001); Karénina Kollmar-Paulenz' "The Ideology of the Hindu Right: Political Religion, Fundamentalism or Communalism?" (2007); Gopal Krishna's "Communal Violence in India" (1985); David Ludden's *Contesting the Nation: Religion, Community, and the Politics of Democracy in India* (ed. 1996); Peter Morey and Alex Tickell's "INTRODUCTION. Indias of the Mind: History, Culture, Literature and Communalism" (2005); Triloki Nath Madan's *Modern Myths, Locked Minds. Secularism and Fundamentalism in India* (1997); Gyanendra Pandey's "The Colonial Construction of 'Communalism:' Britsh Writings on Banares in the Ninetheenth Century" (1990) and *Routine Violence: Nations, Fragments, Histories* (2006); Ornit Shani's *Communalism, Caste and Hindu Nationalism. The Violence in Gujarat* (2007); Sandeep Shastri's "Secularism, Fundamentalism and Communalism: An Attempt at Understanding the Indian Experience" (1994); Achin Vanaik's *The Furies of Indian Communalism: Religion, Modernity, and Secularization* (1997); and Steven I. Wilkinson's *Religious Politics and Communal Violence* (ed. 2005).

major groups within the discourse of communalism, its history and its causes: Culturalist and materialist approaches. While those scholars who have the culturalist view "assume a transcendental Hindu [or else Muslim, Sikh, and other] identity" and consider "communal identity [as …] existing prior to, and independently of, the conflict," scholars following materialist approaches attribute "the appeal of communalism […] to economic and social factors or to the manipulation of the masses by the political elites, or even by the state" (4). Generally, communalism refers to the conceptual division of society and the body politic along the lines of religious — or alternatively, for example, cultural, caste, ethnic, and linguistic — differences, resulting in the re-conceptualization of society as consisting of religious communities instead of individual, diversely different citizens. Along these lines, Thomas Blom Hansen speaks of the "communal unconscious," which he regards as "an ideological construction similar to that of anti-Semitism and racism, and thus not strictly dependent on exposure to certain social experiences or certain specific social milieus" (209). He concedes that "people or families who were exposed to the horrors and displacements of Partition" are a special case because "the communal disposition is naturally sedimented in family narratives and is often, but far from always, readily available for open enunciation" (ibid). He nevertheless makes the general claim that

> the 'communal unconscious' is shaped by exposure to ideological/mythical knowledge of the other rendered in tales, myths, and narratives. Like racism, it works as 'ideological fantasies structuring reality,' a form of disposition that shapes actions and 'gut reactions,' not easily susceptible to modification by arguments and evidence, and often invisible in more consciously held beliefs of an individual. (Hansen 209)

Following Hansen, this "communal unconscious" can thus be said to be deeply entrenched and widespread in such a way as to disable the view that the Hindu-Muslim-divide is merely a recently invented and sporadically imposed concept. Furthermore, the communal divide has actual ramifications in Indian citizens' everyday lives as there are many cases where their religious — or cultural, caste, ethnic, or linguistic — identities are linked to legal, political and social rights or privileges. This situation is bound to result in sectarian strife between these communities defined, for example, in terms of religious affiliation. The 'classical' definition of communalism by the historian of religion Wilfred Cantwell-Smith is still useful:

> Communalism in India can be defined as that ideology which emphasizes as the social, political, and economic unit the group of adherents of each religion, and emphasizes the distinction, even the antagonism, between such groups; […] In imposing its categories of thought upon its victims, it aims at exterminating all other sociological and political

> categories. In raising and making supreme the communal issue, it confuses, if it does not suppress, every other issue, political, social, economic — and even religious. (185)

Cantwell's definition describes attempts to promote religious stereotypes between groups of people identified as different communities in order to create an antagonistic, even violence prone, atmosphere of mutual distrust between those groups. As Pandey points out, the term's common usage in the South Asian context refers to "a condition of suspicion, fear and hostility between members of different religious communities" (1990: 6). This differs only slightly from its application in academic research where

> the term is applied to organized political movements based on the proclaimed interests of religious community, usually in response to a real or imagined threat of another religious community (or communities). It denotes movements that make sectional demands on state policy for a given share in job, education and legislative positions, leading in some instances to demands for the creation of new provinces and states. (Pandey 1990: 6)

In this sense, communalism is a concrete existing example of the abstract concept of 'hostile religious Othering,' which was introduced earlier in this chapter. Commenting on the expression's "noteworthy flexibility," and stressing its origination in the colonial period and its ready adaptation in and for the post-colonial world, Pandey provides a number of areas and instances where the use of the term communalism is appropriate:

> 'Communalism' can refer to Hindu-Muslim or Hindu-Sikh conflict in Northern India, Brahman-non-Brahman conflict in southern and western India, Sinhala-Tamil conflict in Sri Lanka, conflicts between Malays, Chinese and Indians in Malaysia, and between black, brown and white races in the West Indies. (2006: 7)

On the Indian sub-continent — both during colonial rule of the British and after Independence — communal violence has been an expression used specifically with regard to instances of violent conflict between members of different religious communities, and primarily those between Hindus and Muslims. In keeping with this, the term 'communal violence' will be used in this thesis to refer to forms of violence related to religious alterity and linked to the discourse and the politics of communalism.

The instances of communal tensions, conflicts, small-scale and large-scale violence that have occurred since Partition all over India and on its boundaries, especially in the state of Jammu and Kashmir, are too numerous and heterogeneous to be listed and described here. However, apart from Partition and the accompanying violence, which were introduced earlier in this chapter, three more contexts and instances of communal conflict are now described in some detail, namely the "*Ram Janmabhumi* (birthplace of Ram) temple campaign" in the 1980s and

early 1990s, the "Gujarat Pogrom" in early 2002[117] and the situation in the state of Jammu and Kashmir. They are introduced here for two major reasons: Firstly, like Partition violence, these instances — alongside some background information and history — have been reported by the international media and are hence widely known, at least theoretically, outside of India. Secondly, again like Partition violence, these three examples of religiously connoted communal violence have given rise not only to factual newspaper articles and news coverage on television but also to fictional responses in literature and films.[118] Among these fictional responses are the four novels *Cracking India* by Bapsi Sidhwa, *Riot* by Shashi Tharoor, *Fireproof* by Raj Kamal Jha and *Shalimar the Clown* by Salman Rushdie. They respond to and discuss Partition violence (*Cracking India*), the violence accompanying the Ram Jammabhumi temple campaign (*Riot*), the Gujarat pogrom (*Fireproof*) and the situation in Kashmir (*Shalimar the Clown*) and are discussed in detail in the chapters IV.1, IV.2 and IV.3 and IV.4.

### III.6.i The Ram Janmabhumi Temple Campaign

The first example of communal politics resulting in communal tensions and instances of large scale violence on several occasions was the Hindu-nationalist's so called *Ram Janmabhumi* (birthplace of Ram) temple campaign.[119] The campaign promoted the construction of a

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[117] The political scientist Paul Brass introduces the designation "pogrom" in his article "The Gujarat Pogrom of 2002" (2004), a term that has been used by other scholars since then, for example by Parvis Ghassem-Fachandi (*Pogrom in Gujarat*, 2012). The events that occurred in Gujarat in 2002 have been referred to with different labels, including communal "violence" (Wilkinson 2002), "riots" (Muralidhar 2004), "tragedy" (Varadarajan, ed. 2002), "retaliatory bloodbath" (Varshney 2004), "carnage" (Engineer 2004) and even "holocaust" (Sharma 2002).

[118] Apart from novelistic renderings, there also exist numerous films that are based on these occurrences and refer to them in varying degrees of explicitness. Among these are *Firaaq* (2008) directed by Nandita Das — a Hindi political thriller that is set one month after the 2002 violence in Gujarat and looks at the aftermath in terms of the effects on the lives of everyday people; *Bombay* (1995) directed by Mani Ratnam — a Tamil film centred on the so-called 'Bombay Riots' during the period of December 1992 to January 1993 in India, the controversy surrounding the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya and its subsequent demolition on December 6, 1992; *Fiza* (2000) written and directed by Khalid Mohammed — an Indian film about how the Bombay Riots 1992-3 affect the lives of the members of a Muslim family; *Mr. and Mrs. Iyer* (2002) written and directed by Aparna Sen — an Indian drama film about two lead characters, a Brahmin woman and a Muslim man, during a fateful bus journey amidst the carnages of a fictive communal strife in India; *Final Solution* (2004) directed by Rakesh Sharma — a documentary film about the 2002 Gujarat violence banned in India; *Parzania* (2005) co-written and directed by Rahul Dholakia — a film based on the riots in Gujarat in 2002, not released in Gujarat because Cinema owners and distributors in Gujarat refused to screen the film out of fear of retaliation by Hindu activists. Hindutva groups in Gujarat threatened to attack theatres that showed the film.

[119] For details on the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid campaign, the destruction the mosque and the ensuing communal violence see especially the following articles and books: Roma Chatterji and Deepak Mehta's *Living with Violence: An Anthropology of Events and Everyday Life* (2010); S. Conerman's "Muslimische Quellen in der Ram Janmanbhumi Mandir-Babri Masjid Debatte" (1994); R.H. Davis'

temple of the Hindu god Rama on the very spot where the Babri Masjid stood, in the city of Ayodhya in North India. The Hindu-nationalists asserted that the mosque unrightfully occupied what they claim to be the mythical birthplace of Rama. According to their argument, an ancient Ram-temple had once existed on that spot and this temple had only been destroyed in the 16th century by the Muslims who then erected the Babri Mosque there. The campaign was initiated in the early 1980s by the internationally operating Hindu-nationalist organization Vishwa Hindu Parishad (World Hindu Council, VHP). Soon the campaign gained a constantly growing group of supporters stemming from several other Hindu-nationalist organizations, including the movement's political arm, the Bharatiya Janata Party (Indian People's Party, BJP).[120] From the very start the persistent campaigning of Hindu-nationalists contained extensive and hostile anti-Muslim agitation which created great social unrest as it stoked antagonism and increased tensions between the religious communities of the Hindus and the Muslims all over India. In the course of that campaign, the so called *Ram Sila Poojan* was launched in September 1989 by the Hindu-nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Hindu-nationalist groups organized processions in thousands of Indian villages, towns and cities where consecrated bricks for the construction of the Rama temple were carried to previously designated collection points. According to Sunil K. Sahu, "as many as 110 million Hindus in India and many Hindus abroad participated in the worship of bricks at the local level" (256). From there, these bricks were to be transported to Ayodhya, where they should be used to build the ancient temple of Ram at the god's supposed birth place — the Ram

"The Iconography of Rama's Chariot" (1996); Ashgar Ali Engineer's *Babri-Masjid Ramjanambhoomi Controversy* (1990); Sandria B. Freitag's "Contesting in Public: Colonial Legacies and Contemporary Communalism" (1996); S. Gopal's *Anatomy of a Confrontation: the Babri Masjid – Ramjanmabhumi Issue* (ed. 1991); Jan-Peter Hartung, Gillian Hawkes and Anuradha Bhattacharjee's *Ayodhya 1992-2003: The Assertion of Cultural and Religious Hegemony* (2004); K. Jaishankar's "Religious Identity of Perpetrators and Victims of Communal Violence in Post-Colonial India" (2004); C. Jürgensmeyer's "Koexistenz und Konflikt zwischen indischen Religionsgemeinschaften. Das Beispiel Ayodhya" (1995); H. Kulke's "Der militante Hindunationalismus und die Zerstörung der Babri-Moschee in Ayodhya" (1996); David Ludden's "Ayodhya: A Window on the World" (1996); Meena Menon's *Riots and after in Mumbai: Chronicles of Truth and Reconciliation* (2012); Ashis Nandy et al.'s *Creating a Nationality: The Ramjanmabhumi Movement and Fear of the Self* (1995); Harsh Narain's *The Ayodhya Temple-Mosque Dispute. Focus on Muslim Sources* (1993); P. V. Narasimha Rao's *Ayodhya 6 December 1992* (2006); Sunil K. Sahu's "Religion and Politics in India: The Emergence of Hindu Nationalism and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)" (2002); C. Schnellenbach's "Traditionelle Hindu-Quellen zur Geschichte des Rama-Kultes in Ayodhya und ihre Interpretation in der 'Ramjanmabhumi-Babri-Masjid'-Debatte" (1994); S.P. Udayakumar's "Historicizing Myth and Mythologizing History: The 'Ram Temple' Drama" (1997); Peter van der Veer's "'God must be liberated!' A Hindu Liberation in Ayodhya" (1987) and "Ayodhya and Somnath: Eternal Shrines, Contested Histories" (1992); and Christian Weiss' *Religion – Macht – Gewalt: Religiöser 'Fundamentalismus' und Hindu-Moslem-Konflikte in Südasien* (ed. 1996).

[120] For more historical details and background information on the debate see especially Pandey's "Ayodhya and the State" (2006: 93-102).

Janmabhoomi. This very spot was, however, not an empty space but rather still 'occupied' by the medieval Babri mosque. From the beginning it was obvious that the campaign's Hindu nationalist leaders had envisioned destroying the medieval building in order to make room for the Ram temple. Both the campaign and the individual processions not only gave rise to heated debates between politicians and lobbyists from Hindu-nationalist and Muslim parties but also spawned many outbreaks of communal violence all over India. The Ram Janmabhoomi campaign eventually culminated in the demolition of the Babri Masjid on 6th December 1992 which was brought about by "more than 300,000 people," mostly volunteers 'kar sevaks' (militant volunteers) from different Hindu-nationalist organizations, who had gathered in Ayodhya on that day (Ludden, "Introduction. Ayodhya: A Window on the World," 1). The mosque's destruction was again followed by large scale communal violence all over India, killing "1,700 people and injur[ing] 5,500 across the subcontinent over the next four months" (ibid.):

> Within two weeks of the destruction of the mosque, 227 were killed in communal violence in Gujarat, 250 in Bombay (Maharashtra), 55 in Karnataka, 14 in Kerala, 42 in Delhi, 185 in Uttar Pradesh, 100 in Assam, 43 in Bihar, 100 in Madhya Pradesh, and 23 in Andhra Pradesh. (Jaishankar 3)

The city of Bombay, clearly one of the most affected places, saw two waves of large-scale violence, "over five days in 1992 (December 6 to 10) and 15 days in 1993 (January 6 to 20)," (anon. 2004, 1) which cost 900 lives.[121]

## III.6.ii The Gujarat Pogrom of 2012

Almost ten years after the destruction of the medieval mosque, in early spring 2002, another major outbreak of communal violence occurred in the Indian state of Gujarat after two wagons of the Sabarmati express train at Godhra had caught fire and left 58 passengers, mostly Hindu pilgrims and "*kar sevaks* [...] returning from Ayodhya by train on February 27," dead.[122] Despite

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[121] See also Jaishankar 5. The riots were followed by a retaliatory 'Bombay Bombings' on 12th March 1993 which were "perpetuated by Muslim criminal groups with alleged help of gang lord Dawood Ibrahim and his D-Company syndicate, in which 250 people died" (Anon. 2004, 1. See also Menon 2012). The communal violence in Bombay in the wake of the Babri mosque's destruction is commonly referred to as the "Bombay Riots" of 1992/93.

[122] Brass 2004: 2. For details on the violence in Gujarat of 2002 see especially the following articles and books: Paul R. Brass' "The Gujarat Pogrom of 2002" (2004); Concerned Citizens Tribunal's *Crime Against Humanity. An Inquiry into the Carnage in Gujarat* (2 vols., 2002); Ashgar Ali Engineer's "Gujarat Riots in the Light of the History of Communal Violence" (2002) and *The Gujarat Carnage* (ed. 2003); Parvis Ghassem-Fachandi's *Pogrom in Gujarat: Hindu nationalism and anti-Muslim Violence in India*. (2012); B.V. Muralidhar's "Gujarat Riot – The Ugly Scar on Secular India" (2004); B. Rajeshwari's "Communal Riots in India. A Chronology (1947-2003)" (2004); Teesta Setalvad's "Godhra. Crime

the lack of proof, the state government of Gujarat, which was in the hands of the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), immediately propagated that Muslim extremists had attacked the train and set the compartments on fire. This incident was followed by

> widespread killings, mostly of Muslims, [which] were carried out on a scale, and with a ferocity, reminiscent of the genocidal massacres that occurred during the partition of the Punjab in 1947, and with the apparent involvement — by several eyewitness accounts — of ministers in the government itself, under the [Gujarati] leadership of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Chief Minister Narendra Modi. (Brass 2004: 1-2)

In his article "The Gujarat Pogrom of 2002," Paul R. Brass has pointed out that the "numerous features of these killings and destruction of property suggest the validity of the term pogrom and its systematic character."[123] (Brass 2004: 2).

> They include the destruction of over 500 mosques and *dargahs* (shrines). It has also been reported that many, if not most, police either stood aside or coordinated or participated in the violence against Muslims. Moreover, testifying to the high degree of preparation, the marauding mobs of killers carried lists of voters and other documents with them, which made it possible for them to identify the homes of Muslims who were to be killed and whose property was to be destroyed. Also on the riot scenes, according to eyewitnesses, were prominent BJP and VHP leaders, who moved along with the mobs of Hindu rioters. (Brass 2004: 2)

Apart from highlighting its systematic character, especially the complicit, even instigating role of Gujarat's state government in the events, Brass further stresses the fact that "the Gujarat pogrom transgressed beyond the boundaries of ordinary riots, pogroms, and massacres into the 'zone of genocide'" and involved large-scale violence against women and children like "the use of sexual molestation, rape, and murder of women, as well as children, including the reported case of cutting open a pregnant woman's belly and killing the foetus" (2004: 3). After the tidal wave of violence, which most severely affected the city of Ahmedabad, "150,000 individuals had been driven from their homes and more than 1,000 people lay dead, the majority of whom

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against Humanity" (2002); Ornit Shani's *Communalism, Caste and Hindu Nationalism. The Violence in Gujarat*. (2007); Ram Nath Sharma's *Gujarat Holocaust: Communalism in the Land of Gandhi* (2002); Siddarth Varadarajan's *Gujarat – The Making of a Tragedy* (ed. 2002), Ashutosh Varshney's "Understanding Gujarat Violence" (2004), and Steven I. Wilkinson's "Putting Gujarat into Perspective" (2002).

[123] 2004: 2. Brass is only one of many scholars who agree on the categorization of the events as a well organized, pre-planned pogrom against Gujarat's Muslim citizens. Teetsa Setalvad, for example, asserts that the "post-Godhra carnage in Gujarat was an organized crime perpetrated by the state's chief minister and his government. The state's complicity is evident from the various acts of commission and omission of the government and its officials" (127). On this, see especially also Ghassem-Facbandi and Varshney 2004.

were Muslims."[124] Until today, thousands of Muslim refugees who left their homes during the pogrom live under miserable conditions in camps outside the city. Furthermore, hardly any legal prosecutions have taken place and even less convictions of perpetrators have been pronounced. The chapter of the Gujarat pogrom of 2002 is far from closed, at least not from the victims' perspectives, today and continues to stimulate both journalistic articles and scholarly research resulting in an increasing number of publications on different aspects of the topic.

### III.6.iii The Kashmir Conflict

Kashmir, i.e. the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir consisting of the three regions of the Kashmir valley, Jammu and Ladakh, has a special status in many respects. One of these is that Kashmir is the only Indian state that has a significant Muslim majority constituting close to 80% of its population. As was outlined earlier, the state became part of India in 1947 when British India was partitioned along religious lines despite the composition of the state's population in terms of religious affiliation and the fact that it borders on Pakistan. The whole of Kashmir, but predominantly the Kashmir valley, have been the site of international dispute over territory since British India's partition in 1947 as well as the arena of internal, ethnic conflict at least as of the late 1980s. Consequently, the region has been a focal point of continuous violence both within its borders and on its borderlines.[125] According to Iffat Malik, whose book *Kashmir. Ethnic Conflict, International Dispute* (2002) analyses the Kashmir conflict's different external, international and internal, ethnic dimensions and their mutual dependence, it is necessary to conceive of "the Kashmir problem as two issues" that, even though they are "quite distinct," are "closely inter-linked" (347).

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[124] Ghassem-Facbandi 1. According to some sources, the number of victims surpasses 2000: "Estimates of the number of victims of the Gujarat pogrom vary. While the official count is 790 Muslims, 254 Hindus, and 223 missing victims, the numbers circulating elsewhere range frequently between 1,500 and 2,500. While 100,000 Muslims were displaced in relief camps, the official number of Hindus is 40,000 [...]. Variations are partly due to government manipulation, but also it is difficult to identify the religious identities of those killed. Muslim organizations in central Gujarat sometimes claim a higher number" (Ghassem-Fachandi 283, fn. 1). See also Brass (2004): 2, Jaishankar 3, Muralidhar 5, and Rajeshwari 32.

[125] On the history of Kashmir, the state's special status in terms of its religious landscape, the Kashmiri population's affectedness by continuous violence since Partition and the latter's causes and conditions, see especially the following texts: Triloki Nath Madan's "Religious Ideology in a Plural Society: The Muslims and Hindus of Kashmir" (1972) and "Kashmir, Kashmiris, Kashmiriyat" (2006); Iffat Malik's *Kashmir. Ethnic Conflict – International Dispute* (2002); Aparna Rao's *The Valley of Kashmir. The Making and Unmaking of a Composite Culture?* (ed. 2008); Victoria Schofield's *Kashmir in Conflict. India, Pakistan and the Unending War* (2000).

> There is Kashmir, the ethnic conflict within India between Kashmiri Muslims, Pandits [Kashmiri Brahmins, Hindus] and the Indian state. And there is Kashmir, the fifty-plus year international dispute between India and Pakistan over control of Jammu and Kashmir. (Malik 9)

At the same time, and somewhat in contrast to Kashmir's otherwise violent history, many historians and social scientists have noted that the valley "was historically renowned for its absence of communal conflict" (Malik 9). Malik points out that whereas "other parts of the Indian subcontinent periodically succumbed to serious religious violence, Kashmir remained largely immune to this disease" (9). This "lack of Hindu-Muslim fighting" (Malik 9) in the valley has often been attributed to what has been termed the *Kashmīrīyat* — "a common 'Kashmiri' identity."[126] According to Triloki Nath Madan, this generally implies an

> identity cutting across the religious divide and defined by, above all, the key elements of the love of the homeland (Kasheer) and of common speech (Koshur). Besides, similar customs and practices (for example, distribution of cooked or uncooked food as a token of goodwill, visits to shrines, and reverence for the relics of holy men), similar culinary and sartorial styles, shared folklore and folk music, etc., had in past contributed to an ineffable sense of mutual recognition and togetherness that was both physical and cultural (2006: 200).

There are several indicators that for Kashmiris "regional identification was stronger than religious identification; people were Kashmiri first and then Hindu or Muslim" (Malik 9). However, differences between the communities and the question of belonging to a certain religious community — of Muslims, Pandits, or Buddhists — have always been highly relevant. Malik points out that "on the basis of the limited interaction between Muslims and Pandits, and their distinctive religious practices, [...] Kashmiriyat was more myth than fact" (347-48). Pointing to "the critical indicators of shared ethnicity or even community spirit, i.e. social interaction," "common descent," and "mutual regard," Malik concludes "that Pandits and Kashmiri Muslims did not see each other as one" (14). Though their relations "were good to the extent of functional and economic interaction," which was mainly "necessitated by the social profile of the Valley," these did not extent to social interaction" like dining together or even inter-marriage.[127] And yet, the existence of what Madan calls the "subtle sense of 'mutual

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[126] Malik 1. On the term and the idea of *Kashmīrīyat* see especially Triloki Nath Madan's articles "Religious Ideology in a Plural Society: The Muslims and Hindus of Kashmir" (1972) and "Kashmir, Kashmiris, Kashmiriyat" (2006). Madan points out that *Kashmīrīyat* "is not a Kashmiri word" and that it "has become current usage only in the last twenty years or so" since it has become "the ideological foundation of ethnic nationalism" (2006: 200). He also notes that "what Kashmiriyat connotes today depends on whom you ask, a votary of the idea or a sceptic" (Madan 2006: 200).

[127] Malik 14. Madan terms it similarly when he notes that "the distinctiveness of traditional Kashmiri society lay in the Muslims and Pandits having built agreement (a kind of social contract) on the basis of

need'" had enabled and maintained the characteristic Kashmiri "pluralistic culture of tolerance" (2006: 201).

This state of relatively harmonious coexistence finally ended in the late 1980s as the Kashmir valley saw the escalation of the ethnic conflict when several Kashmiri Muslim organizations founded military branches and resorted to armed struggle for *āzādī* and the Kashmir valley's independence from India. Especially since 1947, several events and processes in Jammu and Kashmir had "led Kashmiri Muslims to become disillusioned with India" (Malik 281). These included many notorious actions as well as omissions by several central Indian and Kashmir state governments, renowned for their corruption. Above all, both institutions were and are still blamed for their "failure to provide democracy,[128] failure to provide regional autonomy,[129] and failure to meet socio-economic expectations" (Malik 350). The alienation of the Kashmiri Muslims from Hindu-majority India had further been "encouraged by the rise of political Hinduism in India" with its extensive as well as acrid anti-Muslim polemics on the one hand, and "by the resurgence of Islam throughout the Muslim world — making Kashmiris more aware of their Muslim identity" on the other hand (Malik 289).

Although most of these grievances had existed even before 1947, they had continuously worsened since then. The Kashmir state government's elections in 1987, reputedly rigged again by the Indian government, functioned as the final catalyst of the Kashmiri Muslim's urgent claim for independence from Indian rule which soon developed into a full-blown insurgency. While in the beginning there were several parties and groups of Kashmiri Muslims with similar

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legitimacy of religious and cultural differences. [...] one could speak of the existence of [...] a subtle sense of 'mutual need' that was not wholly free of tension. If anything could be called Kashmiriyat [...], it would be this pluralistic culture of tolerance that was yet not syncretism" (2006: 201).

[128] According to Malik, for "most of Kashmir's post-1947 history, press censorship, electoral rigging, etc., have been used to place and keep in power 'puppet regimes in the control of India" (351). Furthermore, the central government is known to have resorted to "ignoring electoral mandates [...] when unhappy with state governments, using various pretexts to remove them" (ibd.).

[129] Jammu and Kashmir is the only state in India which enjoys special autonomy under Article 370 of the Constitution of India, according to which no law enacted by the Parliament of India, except for those in the field of defence, communication and foreign policy, will be extendable in Jammu and Kashmir unless it is ratified by the state legislature of Jammu and Kashmir. Subsequently, jurisdiction of the Supreme Court of India over Jammu and Kashmir has been extended. ("Article 370." Web: *Constitution of India*. http://www.constitution.org/cons/india/p21370.html, retrieved December 14, 2012). Furthermore, Jammu and Kashmir is the only Indian state that has its own flag and constitution, and Indians from other states cannot purchase land or property in the state. Pointing to the numerous and extensive violations of that article by the Indian government since 1947 and "the rapid erosion of state autonomy in Kashmir through various 'puppet' rulers it placed in power there, however, Malik remarks that the "Article 370 today has little relevance beyond the paper it is written on" (351)

motives it was the "Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF)" that emerged as the leading organization demanding freedom (*āzādī*)," projecting itself as "a secular democratic body" and stressing "the relevance of armed struggle" (Madan 2006). Soon afterwards,

> the movement developed fundamentalist and communal orientations, and targeted Kashmiri Pandits as 'informers' (*mukhbir*) and 'enemy agents', the enemy being the Indian government. Street bombings and selective killings of the Pandits began in mid-1989, and within months the militant cadres of JKLF clarified their concept of *āzādī* as Nizam-i-Mustafa, Islamic rule. (Madan 2006: 197)

Although the attacks of the different militant groups were largely "confined to the Indian authorities," the Pandits, not least "because of their own strong pro-India leanings," reacted to these developments "with great alarm" (Malik 290). They were confronted with "warnings in some newspapers and on neighbourhood public address systems asking them to support Islamic rule or leave the Valley" (Madan 2006: 197). Their sense of danger was surely intensified by the fact that "a number of leading Hindus were also assassinated and, according to the All India Kashmir Pandit Conference, thirty-two Pandits were killed in the seven months from September 1989" (Malik 290). As a result, many members of the Pandit community began to leave the Kashmir valley.

> What began as isolated incidents of migrations rapidly ended up as a near total exodus. Of the estimated 200.000 Pandits, all but 10,000 persons, or even less [...], have left their homes, jobs, businesses, and properties to seek shelter in refugee camps in Jammu, Delhi, and elsewhere, or with relatives, they have not yet been able to return [...]. (Madan 2006: 197-98)

After initially taking a political approach to countering the Kashmiri Muslims' claim for independence and quelling the militant insurgency in the Valley, the Indian government resorted to stifling the movement through the exertion of maximal military force by 1991 (see Malik 303-07). The dispatch of thousands of soldiers to Kashmir was meant to vanquish the insurgency, strike down the separatist movement, stop the violence and secure the state's peace.[130] Instead, it resulted in the militarization of the Valley, the intensification of the militants' activities and thousands of deaths, predominantly of Kashmiri citizens. Some analysts have suggested that the number of Indian troops in Jammu and Kashmir today is close to 600,000 although estimates vary and the Indian government refuses to release official figures.

[130] According to Malik, "the operational procedures of the security forces" include the "sealing off the LoC ['Line of Control'] dividing Indian and Pakistani-held territory" in order to "prevent the crossing of militants and weapons," "the mounting of cordon-and-search operations in civilian areas to try and find militants and/or weapons," and "the detention and questioning of suspected militants" (304-05).

Both the Indian troops and the Kashmiri militants — even though to a far lesser extent — are said to have committed widespread humanitarian abuses, numerous kidnappings, mostly of Kashmiri citizens, and extrajudicial killings (see Malik 307-12).

As a result of the overall militarization of Kashmir due to the omnipresence of the Indian army, "armed security forces" and "gun-wielding militants" on the one hand, and the Pandits' exodus on the other hand, the "traditional pluralist and tolerant character of the Kashmir Valley has been irreparably damaged" (ibid. 199, 198). Today, Kashmiri Muslims and Pandits "no longer live in the same regions" — which effectively put an end to their previously extensive functional and economic interactions — "they have different aspirations, separate political organizations" (Malik 1). Furthermore, the distinct communal consciousness of both Kashmiri Muslims and Pandits has grown considerably and questions of religious identification have become increasingly linked to instances of violence. According to Malik, "among both ethnic groups perceptions of identity are now much more firmly rooted in religion" with Pandits being "far more conscious of being Hindu, Kashmiri Muslims of being Muslim" as is seen from the fact that "both communities have become more orthodox in the practice of their respective religions and — in the case of Pandits — their increased proximity to their co-religionists in the rest of India" (Malik 348). The result of these developments has been that "the gap between the two communities has widened considerably" and the "Muslim-Pandit relationship of mutual tolerance and harmony was transformed into one of great tension and — on the part of the Pandits — fear" (Malik 348-49). Referring back to the Kashmiriyat, Madan states that it "refers to a historical promise that was never fully realized" (2006: 201). And while he accedes that "Kashmiri Muslims may still talk about Kashmiriyat, and so may the Pandits," he stresses that "the prospect of a merger of cultural horizons, while it produces nostalgia, seems unrealizable, particularly following the Pandit exodus" (ibd.). Malik, too, concludes that the Pandit's exodus "put the final nail in the coffin of the *Kashmiriyat*" as it "added geographical distance to the numerous other factors already dividing them from Kashmiri Muslims" (Malik 292). In short, present-day Kashmir's society is characterized by the ever-growing alienation and hostility between its religious communities and the omnipresence of violent turmoil.

To sum up, it can be stated that in present day India, the phenomenon of religiously connoted communal violence is considered as one of the greatest grievances afflicting its citizens. Instances of communal violence are often triggered by the slightest, negligent incidents

and easily turn serious. Communal violence — be it physical, psychological or forms of structural violence — pervades most if not all political and socio-cultural spheres of present day India; it is a constant presence in the everyday lives of many Indian citizens. The question remains, however, if and how exactly these instances of violence and similar ones are linked to religion or result from the religious identity of perpetrators and victims. As already stated above, there are many voices both for and against the claim that religion plays a major part in, for example, communal violence. This dissertation is not the place where this question will be solved. It will instead look at how contemporary novels approach and discuss this question — i.e. how they represent instances of communal and other religiously connoted forms of violence, which perspectives and voices relating to these instances, their contexts and causative factors they include, and how they position themselves regarding the role of religion(s) and the issue of religious alterity in the context of the events and processes they represent.

# IV TEXTUAL ANALYSES: FICTIONAL REPRESENTATIONS OF RELIGIOUS ALTERITY AND VIOLENCE

## IV.1 "One man's religion is another man's poison" — Maturation and Loss in Bapsi Sidhwa's *Cracking India*

> There is much disturbing talk. India is going to be broken. [...] Gandhi, Jinnah, Nehru, Iqbal, Tara Singh, Mountbatten are the names I hear. And I become aware of religious differences. (*Cracking India* 101)

Just as the title of Bapsi Sidwha's novel suggests, *Cracking India*, which was originally published under the title of *Ice-Candy-Man*,[131] is a Partition novel. Bapsi Sidhwa (*1938) is a Parsi essayist, novelist and playwright. Born in Karachi, Pakistan, she lives in the USA today. According to her own statement, she has been "striving above all to bring women's issues of the Indian subcontinent into public discussion."[132] In all of her five novels, either Parsi culture and every-day life or the many problems and challenges which women face in the India subcontinent are of central importance. Most of Sidhwa's novels address both issues, and *Cracking India* is not an exception. *Cracking India* discusses the central question of how religious alterity and violence relate to each other both with respect to the specific historical context of Partition and on a more general level. Most importantly, *Cracking India* focuses on the gender aspect and what can be termed the specifically female perspective often sidelined in historical accounts of Partition. Set in Lahore against the historical background of British India's partition and independence, the novel traces the coming of age of its fictional Parsi girl protagonist and focalizer Lenny Sethi, called Lenny baby throughout the narrative, from the mid 1940s until early 1948. Looking back on her crucial formational years through the perceptive angle of her childhood self, it is Lenny the adult who recounts her own path from the sheltered dependency of early childhood to the status of relative emancipation as a disillusioned adolescent after having been initiated into society at a time when people killed

[131] The title was only changed to *Cracking India* for the publication on the US American market. As Robert L. Ross points out, this was done mainly because the US publishers worried that "Americans would misunderstand 'ice-candy' and confuse it with drugs" (1996: 185) and hence believe that the novel was about a drug dealer. Interestingly, this is would have been adequate in way because the character to which the earlier title refers to resembles a drug dealer in the sense that apart from indeed being a popsicles vendor he sells lies and false promises to credulous people in need.

[132] http://www.bapsisidhwa.com/index.html, accessed Oct. 10, 2012. Her five novels are *Water* (2006, based on Deepa Metha's film *Water*), *An American Brat* (1993), *Cracking India* (1991, made into the film *Earth* by Deepa Metha released in 1998), *The Pakistani Bride* (1982), and *The Crow Eaters* (1978).

each other on the basis of religious affiliation: "Lenny's development from childhood to adolescence coincides with India's struggle for independence from Britain and the partitioning of the country into India and Pakistan" (Jha and Kumar 211).

I suggest that British India's path towards independence and partition is much more than the historical background of the fictional character's coming of age and that the link between British India's path and that of Lenny baby by far exceeds that of coincidental analogy. I argue that the adult narrator retrospectively conceives of her childhood self as an allegory of British India before its independence and projects her formational phase and the experiences she made therein as constituting an allegory of those of British India.

On the basis of its different features, I conceive *of Cracking India* as a revisionist historical formation novel. It constitutes a blend of a revisionist historical novel, involving aspects of Ansgar Nünning's two types of "realistischer historischer Roman" and "revisionistischer historischer Roman" on the one hand,[133] and the generic features of the formation novel (*Bildungsroman*)[134] on the other hand. The term 'formation novel' is given preference to that of *Bildungsroman* for several reasons: Firstly, the former term avoids the unwished for suggestion of a narrow German cultural context implied by the concept of 'Bildung'. Secondly, I consider the term 'formation novel' more inclusive than those of education or apprenticeship novel regarding its potential reference to more diverse kinds of character development. Thirdly, I assume that the term 'formation novel' allows for a greater variety of elements — not only fictional characters but also abstract entities such as countries or ideas — to qualify for being a novel's protagonists. The latter reason is of special importance in view of the fact that I assume the entity of British India to be one of *Cracking India*'s protagonists.

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[133] The categorization of *Cracking India* as comprising elements of both the "realistischer historischer Roman" (1996: 262-67) and the "revisionistischer historischer Roman" (ibid.: 268-75) was made on the basis of Nünning's "Merkmalsmatrix"'s six aspects (i.e. "Selektionsstruktur," "Relationierung und Gestaltung der Erzählebenen," "Zeitbezug," "Vermittlungsformen," "Verhältnis zum Wissen der Historiographie," and "Dominante Illusionstypen und Funktionspotential") for determining a historical novel's specific type. *Cracking India* appears to be a blend of the two types named above, being a realist style historical novel with a revisionist outlook by virtue of its providing alternative perspectives on the time of Partition and thereby questioning the official historiographical approach to and versions of the events.

[134] In this thesis, the conception of the genre of the formation novel or *Bildungsroman* is based primarily on Ortrud Gutjahr's *Einführung in den Bildungsroman* (2007); James Hardin's "Introduction" to *Reflection and Action. Essays on the Bildungsroman* (1991); Fritz Martini's "Bildungsroman — Term and Theory" (1991); Franco Morretti's *The Way of the World* (1987); Jeffrey L. Sammons' "The Bildungsroman for Nonspecialists: An Attempt at Clarification" (1991); and Randolph P. Shaffner's *The Apprenticeship Novel* (1984).

Deviating from both official historical accounts of Independence and the standard formation novel, *Cracking India* does neither focus on the positive aspects of freedom from colonial power nor recount its protagonist's successful initiation into society against all odds. Instead of presenting Partition along religious lines and the consequent large-scale violence as secondary events, it projects them as key elements that essentially determined the formation of the future natures, values and ideas of both Lenny baby and British India. According to my reading, *Cracking India* suggests that due to their experiences of religiously connoted violence in the crucial phases of their formation both the adult Lenny and the independent states India and Pakistan have internalized the idea that religious alterity and violence are so closely related as to make the former necessarily entail the latter.

Since Lenny baby's formational phase is considered as constituting an allegory of British India's independence and partition, three aspects are considered to be of eminent importance for shedding light on *Cracking India*'s position regarding Partition in particular, the connexion between religious alterity and violence in general, and the consequences of both. These aspects are, firstly, the ways in which the novel establishes the allegorical link between its fictional human protagonist and British India, secondly, the crucial characteristics of the allegory's constitutive elements, and, thirdly, the ways in which Partition and the role of religious alterity in it are perceived and commented on by both the novel's protagonist and its narrator, the adult Lenny. Furthermore, the analysis of the narrative's perspectival structure is considered an indispensable basis of the detailed discussion of the three aspects and will therefore be conducted before.

## IV.1.i *Cracking India* as a Revisionist Historical Novel

Like most Partition novels, *Cracking India* abounds with verifiable references to historical facts. Apart from several dates and settings like Amritsar, Delhi and Lahore, these facts include events such as Jinnah's speech "inaugurating the Constituent Assembly sessions on 11 August" (CI 154), and persons like the leader of the 'Quit India'-movement Mohandas K. Gandhi (1869-1948), Pakistan's first governor-general Mohammad Ali Jinnah (1876-1948), the British India's last viceroy and governor-general Lord Mountbatten (1900-79), India's first president Jawaharlal Nehru (1889-1964) and the Sikhs' political as well religious leader Tara Singh (1885-1967). Both historical settings and events are intricately interwoven with the novel's plot around its protagonist Lenny baby's coming of age. Details of the history of Partition and central motifs generally pervading Partition literature such as the growing hatred between

religious communities and the train massacre are deeply engrained in the narrative's fabric. Apart from including a few fictional encounters between Lenny baby and historical figures like Tara Sing (CI 143) and Gandhi (CI 94-96), *Cracking India* has its girl protagonist witness the exodus of Lahore's Hindu and Sikh population (e.g. CI 169), the large-scale violence during the Partition riots (e.g. CI 145-49) and the arrival of thousands of Muslim refugees from across the border (e.g. CI 187-88). Refraining from counter-factual elements, Sidhwa's novel evolves chronologically and tells both the story of British India's partition and the events involving its fictional characters according to the laws of realist style narration, just as any realistic historical novel would (Nünning 1996: 262-67).

The interesting aspect of *Cracking India* is not its factual accuracy, however, but its narrative approach to telling the history of Independence and Partition which sidelines the successful freedom struggle and instead focuses on the horrific violence that accompanied the birth of the two nations as Ananya J. Kabir points out:

> Whether in India or in Pakistan, these discourses [that surround the event of partition with silence] were similar: "official" narratives both historiographical and popular, which celebrate the achievement of Independence; nationalist discourses, which necessitate the erasure of certain cultural losses; and the social codes of honour and shame; which demand silence from traumatized women, not therapeutic narrativizing. Sidhwa goes against the grain of all these discourses. (2005: 183)

This includes the perspectival structure involving a child focalizer and its adult self narrator, the use of the generic features of the formation novel, and last but not least the establishment of the allegorical link between British India and its child protagonist. These features provide the novel with a decidedly revisionist aspect regarding officially sanctioned historiography on British India's independence and partition.

## IV.1.ii *Cracking India*'s Perspectival Structure: A Dual Vision

Firstly, this is achieved by employing the unorthodox perceptive angle of a homodiegetic Parsi child focalizer, Lenny baby, and the way her observations and experiences are contextualized and commented on by the novel's narrator, who is Lenny baby's own adult self. *Cracking India* features what Goran Nieragden terms "heterodiegetic figural focalization" (Nieragden 2002: 692) and Wolf Schmid describes as a "non-diegetic narrator" telling the story from a "figural point of view" (Schmid 2010: 106-7). *Cracking India*'s narrating entity is a hetero- or non-diegetic one with the adult Lenny telling and at points analysing the story of her own past. The narrating adult provides retrospect reflection but is not an acting character in the

narrated story world herself. It is the narrator's childhood self Lenny baby, one of the novel's main characters on the diegetic level, which the novel's perceiving and experiencing entity, called focalizer by many narratologists.[135] This perspectival structure and the viewpoints and insights it provides set *Cracking India* apart from most other Partition novels. *Train to Pakistan*, *Sunlight on a Broken Column*, *Tamas*, most short stories and other Partition narratives are usually told by an extra-diegetic narratorial narrator implying a Hindu, Muslim or Sikh male point of view. In contrast, *Cracking India* is narrated by an adult Parsi woman from the point of view of her child self — thus combining the candidness of a child and the insightfulness of a woman from a marginal religious community.

As the focalizer is the daughter from a wealthy Parsi family who is about five years old and unable to walk due to Polio when the story begins, her point of view is necessarily restricted. The girl has access to information on contemporary politics and events only by virtue of the sparse accounts given to her by adults and other children, and as a result of being present at several discussions among adult characters. Lenny baby has especially two features, however, that still make her an ideal witness and recorder of those very stories and particulars, which Urvashi Butalia, Gyanendra Pandey and many literary scholars demand to be told.

Firstly, the child focalizer is cast as the ostensive epitome of a naive, candid, curious, scrutinizing, unprejudiced view of the world. Sidhwa often stresses this point in interviews when she opines that "everything is a little fresher and refreshing from a child's point of view — more direct" and says that the character Lenny was her attempt at "establishing a sort of truthful witness, whom the reader can believe" (Montenegro 519). The status of Lenny baby as truthful child reporter in the narrative is further substantiated by the fact that she is unable to steal or even lie. After several failed efforts to do so she herself deplores that this failure is obviously "a life sentence" and that she is "[c]ondemned to honesty," a "demon in saint's clothing." (94) The full truth of this self-characterization is shown when her notorious honesty, combined with credulity, brings about the greatest catastrophe of her early youth. Unable to sustain the protective lie put forward by the adults that her Hindu Ayah has gone away to Amritsar, she unwillingly becomes the traitor of her beloved nanny, who is then abducted by the Muslim mob, subjected to rape and humiliation.

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[135] Among them Manfred Jahn, James Phelan and, most importantly, Mieke Bal. Bal was the scholar who actually introduced the term "focalizer." The concept of a figure on the diegetic level that functions as a reflector or filter of narrative information and representation has existed before, however, at least since Genette's *Narrative Discourse*.

> I am the monkey-man's performing monkey, the trained circus elephant, the snake-man's charmed cobra, an animal with conditioned reflexes that cannot lie. . . (195).

Even though the inability to lie is considered an undesirable character trait by Lenny baby due to its immediate consequences, her honesty only adds to her status of a truthful witness, which the narrator can rely on and the reader is urged to believe.

This status is secondly complemented by the fact that Lenny baby is cast as child of a Parsee family. This confers on her the detachedness and "the noncommittal attitude of the Parsi community" (Singh 1992: 305) and thus the position of an uninvolved, detached and unbiased observer. Being a marginal, tiny, scarcely known, geographically dispersed and politically insignificant community, the Parsees were not caught up in the communal conflicts during Partition, a circumstance which Lenny comments early on: "Godmother, [...] and my nuclear family are reduced to irrelevant nomenclatures — we are Parsee." (*CI* 102) While the general atmosphere grows increasingly tense and fraught with inter-communal suspicion, Lenny's 'exotic' religious affiliation makes her an outsider of the looming communal hostilities. As a member of a religious community that does not publicly engage in the political debates of the day and has no ready-made set of stereotypes attached to it, she cannot be assigned a precast role in the inter-communal strive and instead becomes a sidelined and invisible witness of the events. The fact that Lenny — i.e. both the adult narrator and the child focalizer — belongs to the Parsee community invokes a detached view of the communal conflict raging between the other communities of the Christians, Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs. Sidhwa, herself also a Parsi who as a child witnessed Partition, commented on this circumstance when asked if her religious affiliation made a difference:

> It certainly made a big difference, because Parsis, though involved in the Independence struggle, were not with any one side during the partition. [...] And, as such, they weren't harmed by any party. In any case, there were such a tiny minority that they had no clout this way or that. In *Ice-Candy-Man*, it was very useful to use the voice of a Parsi child narrator, because it does bring about an objectivity there. Your emotions are not so... or at least your participation in events is not so involved. You are more free to record them, not being an actor immediately involved. (Montenegro 519)

Obviously, the focaliser Lenny baby is meant be perceived as a candid, impartial and hence trustworthy witness. At the same time, the fact that Lenny baby is a crippled girl who suffers from Polio adds to her status of being perceived as uninvolved and marginal by the other characters on the diegetic level and yet, at the same time, always in the middle of the events. As she is has to be taken care of continuously, she is also given more liberties and insights than

other children at her age. Paradoxically, her restricted physical mobility combined with her status of being a child increases her social mobility, as she is often taken along by her Ayah to places and meetings which would otherwise have been deemed unsuitable for children from her social class and at her age. The benefits of this perspective are highlighted by A. J. Kabir who observes that because the child Lenny baby "can cross the class divide, the narrative can describe the anxieties and bewilderments of the domestic underclass represented by Ayah and her coterie of admirers, and the tensions that increasingly enter their everyday camaraderie" (2005: 184). Thus, Lenny is often closer to situations and events she is not able to understand and process properly and being able to witness the goings-on of 'the adult world.' According to Kabir, it is especially with regard to the representation of atrocious violence that the child's perspective becomes valuable as it "facilitates an uncomprehending description of the violence and its effects [...]. Narrating partition through Lenny thus allows Sidhwa to negotiate the delicate issue of sensitively representing violence" (2005: 82).

The child's nevertheless restricted perspective and understanding of what she observes are amended by the adult narrator. She supplements Lenny baby's observations and experiences with additional historical details, greater scope and evaluations enabled by her greater knowledge. The grown-up, mature Lenny contextualises and puts into perspective the feelings of her child self. This becomes clear at many points in the narrative when the adult narrator provides detailed historical background information, which the child could not have known.

> Within three months seven million Muslims and five million Hindus and Sikhs are uprooted in the largest and most terrible exchange of population known to history. (*CI* 169)

The adult Lenny's point of view is also highly tangible when she interprets situations in a highly reflective manner, employing words and referring to concepts which Lenny the child would not have been able to use. Furthermore, she reflects on the nature of the process of remembering the past.

> How long does Lahore burn? Weeks? Months? [...] Despite all the ruptured dreams, broken lives, buried gold, bricked-in rupees, secreted jewelry, lingering hopes ... the fire could not have burned for months and months ... But in my memory it is branded over an inordinate length of time: memory demands poetic license. [*CI* 148-49]

This type of perspective structure, where the experiencing-I on the diegetic level is the same, earlier biographical person as the narrating-I on the extra-diegetic level, often features what James Phelan calls "dual-vision or dual-focalization:" In many sequences of the narratives, "story

and discourse overlap" and mingle, and it is "both the narrating-I and the experiencing-I" who envision and (re-)experience the happenings and situations of the story world (Phelan 2001: 60). This is exactly what occurs in *Cracking India* where "the political events and their consequences are [...] refracted through two narrative levels" (2005: 182). At many points in the narrative, it is difficult or even impossible to distinguish, who is actually perceiving and speaking, if it is only the child that perceives or if it is at the same time or primarily the adult Lenny who re-envisions, contextualizes and interprets her past perceptions in the light of experiences she has made and knowledge she has acquired since. According to Kabir, this constellation "enables the dissociation of the remembering self and from the remembered self, but in a manner that both evades and acknowledges complicity" (2005: 182).

The result of this dual vision, which importantly includes a Parsi girl focalizer and a Pakistani woman narrator, is twofold. On the one hand, *Cracking India*'s story of Partition supplements the historical facts with the stories of ordinary people's lives, including those of butchers, cooks, farmers, servants, sweepers and even Untouchables — owing to the perspective of the female child. Irrespective of their religious affiliation and with a special focus on the fate of women, the novel tells of their sufferings and deaths. Also, the novel displays a rather sceptical, even irreverent, attitude towards the important men shaping history. This becomes especially clear in the passage recounting the fictional meeting of Lenny baby with Gandhi whom she describes as an "improbable toss-up between a clown and a demon" who mainly talks about bowel movements (CI 96). Owing to these aspects, *Cracking India* questions the focus of authoritative historiographical accounts on high politics, their glorification of figures such as Gandhi and Nehru, and their tendency to belittle the relevance of, or even omit, precisely those stories which the novel tells.

On the other hand, the effect of the dual vision is that the events of the past as they had happened to and were witnessed by the child Lenny are considerably changed by adult narrator's framing and interpretation. The degree to which retrospect interpretation of the past events through the act of remembering has changed what might be called the 'original experience' is no longer accessible. The vision of adult Lenny the narrator — situated in the present and judging the past events from the state of things in that present — is the enduring vision. This is a bleak vision, which is in stark contrast to most historiographical accounts of British India's independence. It poses the deterioration of inter-communal relationships and the atrocious violence occurring during Partition as the key moments essentially determining

both Lenny's and British India's 'coming of age' and continuously points out their unabated relevance in the present.

## IV.1.iii A Formation Novel of Lenny Baby and British India

The second of the novel's features which helps establishing its revisionist potential regarding most historiographic accounts is its status of being a formation novel whose fictional character is an allegory of British India. According to Franco Moretti, "youth is both a necessary and sufficient definition of [the] heroes" (4) of a formation novel. On the basis of the obvious analogy between the maturation of Lenny baby on the one hand and the 'coming of age' of British India on the other hand, I argue that Lenny baby's initiation into adolescence is not only conditioned by British India's path towards independence but actually constitutes an allegory of it. I would even go further and claim that British India is not only the novel's historical and geographical setting but really *Cracking India*'s second, abstract protagonist.

*Cracking India* establishes Lenny baby as allegory of British India from the very beginning.[136] In the very first scene, the handicapped Lenny baby — "lounging in [her] briskly rolling pram" pushed around Lahore by her nanny — obviously symbolizes a heteronomous India under the patronizing rule of the British colonizers. The image is completed with "the sudden appearance of an English gnome [...] wagging a leathery finger in my ayah's face" (12). Ignorant of Lenny's handicap, the "English gnome" lectures Ayah on the inappropriateness of pushing around Lenny in a pram and commands that Lenny stand up and walk alone.

> Wagging his finger over my head into Ayah's alarmed face, he tut-tuts: "Let her walk. Shame, shame! Such a big girl in a pram! She's at least four!" He smiles down at me, his brown eyes twinkling intolerance. I look at him politely, concealing my complacence. The Englishman is short, leathery, middle-aged, pointy-eared. [...] "Come up. Up, up!" he says, crooking a beckoning finger. (*CI* 12)

The man is only temporarily silenced when Lenny "raises [her] trouser cuff to reveal the leather straps and wicked steal callipers harnessing [her] right boot. Confronted by Ayah'y liquid eyes and prim gloating, and the triumphant revelation of my callipers, the Englishman withers" (CI 12). Convinced of his superior knowledge and driven by instructive zeal, however,

[136] Most, if not all, scholars who have written on the novel have identified Ayah as the novel's singular allegory of (British) India. I argue that this approach cannot capture all the actual allegorical relations established in the novel. Instead, I suggest that it is the functional entity of Lenny baby and Ayah, which constitutes a kind of composite allegory of British India, combining different, even opposing aspects in one symbiotic relation which is broken apart just as British India is partitioned.

the Englishman is not daunted for long: "[B]ack he bounces, bobbing up and down. 'So what?' he says, resurrecting his smile. 'Get up and walk! You need the exercise more than other children! How will she become strong, sprawled out like that in her pram? Now, you listen to me' " (CI 12). He proceeds to impart what he apparently considers as undeniable wisdom to Lenny and Ayah until they eventually abandon him:

> He lectures Ayah, and prancing before the carriage which has again started to roll says, "I want you to tell her mother..." Ayah and I hold our eyes away, effectively dampening his good-Samaritan exuberance ... and wagging his head and turning about, the Englishman quietly dissolves up the driveway from which he had so enthusiastically sprung. (CI 12)

The image of the crippled, dependent Lenny in the pram who is commanded by an ignorant stranger to stand up and walk although it is obvious that she is still too handicapped to do so without harm is a rich critical allegory of the British colonizers' premature and precipitous abandonment of India after having effected it's dependency on foreign rule for decades and crippled the country's ability 'to walk alone'. The image is completed by the information that Lenny's lameness and considerable dependency on others' support result from her having contracted polio. The crippling disease of polio is succinctly projected as British colonial rule over India when Lenny's doctor Colonel Barucha proclaims that it was only brought to India by the British: "'If anyone's to blame, blame the British! There was no polio in India till they brought it here!'" (CI 26) Lenny baby readily agrees to her doctor's indictment and, through her suffering from polio, establishes a link between her own struggle with the disease and the Quit India-movement:

> "The goddamn English!" I think, infected by Colonel Barucha's startling ferocity at this "dastardly" [...] instance of British treachery. "They gave us polio!" And [...] I feel it is my first personal involvement with Indian politics: the Quit-India sentiment that has fired the imagination of a subject people and will soon sweep away the Raj! (CI 26)

The allegorical link between the protagonist Lenny baby and British India is further reinforced as the narrative unfolds — gaining both in scope and complexity.

A narrative element that plays an important role in establishing this link is the rendition of Lenny baby's nightmares, two of which are of especial interest. In the early section of *Cracking India*, when Partition is still only a distant rumour, and the three communities of Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs co-exist peacefully in Lahore, Lenny is continuously plagued by nightmares at dawn. Lenny the adult narrator succinctly states that these dreams "connect [her] to the pain of others" (*CI* 31) and thereby underlines the proleptic significance of these nightmares: They

are identified as forebodings of the violence which looms in the near future of Lenny baby and the people around her. One dream quite explicitly symbolizes what Jagdev Singh calls "the impending vivisection of India" (1992: 307):

> Children lie in a warehouse. Mother and Ayah move about solicitously. The atmosphere is businesslike and relaxed. Godmother sits by my bed smiling indulgently as men in uniforms quietly slice off a child's arm here, a leg there. She strokes my head as they dismember me. (*CI* 31)

Lenny's horror is heightened by the fact that the people she trusts above all other and loves most — her mother, her nanny and her Godmother — do not help her and are even accomplices in the act of her dismemberment. Even more bizarre to her is that Lenny remembers to "feel no pain. Only an abysmal sense of loss — and a chilling horror that no one is concerned by what is happening" (CI 31). This nightmare reinforces the close link between the character of Lenny baby and India under British rule. The businesslike, almost casual dismemberment of the child parallels the clinical partitioning of the country by detached bureaucrats unfamiliar with the social-cultural particulars and ignorant of the impending consequences for the people who were directly affected by the changed conditions resulting from the freshly drawn boundaries.

The other major nightmare of Lenny, which continuously haunts her at dawn, is that of the hungry Zoo lion who manages to break free and, "cutting across Lawrence Road to Birwood Road, prowls from the rear of the house to the bedroom door, and in one bare-fanged leap crashes through to sink his fangs into my stomach" (CI 33). The zoo lion, apart from being one of the numerous members of what Lenny terms her "own stock of Indian bogeymen" (CI 31), has an additional metaphorical meaning in the Partition narrative. The "ferocious beast of [Lenny's] nightmares" (CI 19) is effectively cast as "a symbol of the flood of mutual hatred that the dawn of Indian Independence released to cause havoc to the Hindus, the Muslims and the Sikhs on both sides of the border" (Singh 1992: 307-8).

The symbolical meaning of the zoo lion is further strengthened by an episode occurring in the Queen's Park. The park is one of Ayah's favorite places where often takes Lenny baby to meet with her circle of friends. It is one of the most important settings in the novel and obviously symbolizes India under the colonial rule of the British: "Queen Victoria, cast in gunmetal, is majestic, massive, overpowering, ugly. Her statue imposes the English Raj in the park" (CI 28). One day, Ayah tells her friends who include the zoo attendant Sher Singh that Lenny is scared of the zoo lion. Eager for Ayah's benevolent gaze, they attempt to set Lenny's

mind at ease. Lenny, however, knows that the soothing effect of their reassurances of her safety will come to an end soon enough: "The logic is irrefutable during daylight hours as I sit among friends beneath Queen Victoria's lion-intimidating presence. But alone, at night, the logic will vanish" (*CI* 98).

Bereft of the British rulers, symbolized by the ugly yet "lion-intimidating presence" of Queen Victoria, Lenny forebodes, no power will be left capable of containing the furies of communal hatred, symbolized by the unleashed zoo lion. I argue that by virtue of these two nightmares, *Cracking India* not only "prepares the reader for the gruesome and gory pattern of communal discord that became blatantly obvious during Partition," as Singh argues (1992: 308), but firmly establishes the allegorical link between the character Lenny baby and the abstract notion of British India.[137]

In a way, then, *Cracking India* is a formation novel of both Lenny baby and British India with each protagonist's developments mirroring those of the other. This is pointed out by Ananya J. Kabir who highlights the fact that narratives like *Cracking India* "reconfigure the freedom struggle as the struggle for personal emancipation, and the trauma of Partition as the loss of innocence and girlhood" (185). With regard to these two protagonists — the personal and the abstract one — *Cracking India* meets not only the requirements of rather broad definitions such as Moretti's but also more elaborate ones like that of Ortrud Gutjahr who states

> Im Bildungsroman geht es somit um die Reifung eines Protagonisten, der in spannungsvoller Auseinandersetzung mit sozialen Ordnungen und der natürlichen Umwelt das Ziel verfolgt, eine seinen Neigungen und Wünschen angemessene und zugleich gesellschaftlich kompatible Lebensform zu finden.[138]

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[137] I do not mean to claim that Lenny baby is the only allegory of British India in the novel. I would rather argue that *Cracking India* actually includes many characters, things or settings which in some aspect sense or other, in some episode or other, feature this metaphorical link to India — be it Lenny baby's partitioned body (India as geographical entity), Ayah (the utopian dream of an independent India as multicultural nation brimming with life and energy), Lenny's Godmother (India's age-old pre-colonial traditions), the Queen's Garden (India under British rule) and the wrestler's restaurant (India wracked with increasing communal hatred on the eve of Partition), to name but a few. Since the novel as a whole abounds with allegories and metaphors in so many respects, it could even be referred to not only as a narrative on Partition but really as complex allegory of Partition. According to VLVN Narendra Kumar, "in *Ice-Candy-Man*, allegory is the structural principle controlling the narrative. Some Indian scholars regard this work as a moral allegory. According to Nilufer Bharucha, the Hindu Ayah is symbolic of the Indian earth whereas Shirin Kudchedkar observes that Ayah represents the innocent, natural sexuality of women who becomes the prey of debauched male desire" (2004: 175).

[138] Gutjahr 8. *Cracking India* is also in line with most of the "fundamental principles" Randolph P. Shaffner names in order to describe the "apprenticeship novel" (Shaffner 16-27).

The narrative charts the actual and metaphorical journey of its two protagonists from sheltered but constricted infancy to relative maturity. For both its youthful protagonists, this journey's ultimate *goal* is the reconciliation between the desire for self-fulfilment and self-determination on the one hand and the adaptation to the demands of a given social reality on the other hand.

The revisionist aspect of this analogy is that both cannot wholly reach their goals because the negative experiences on their paths towards adolescence and independence respectively overshadow the positive aspects of both Lenny baby and British India coming of age. The experience of the increasingly acrimonious communal tensions and their eventual eruption into atrocious violence preceding and accompanying Partition essentially influences Lenny baby's formation and by implication that of British India.

### *Ayah as Second Part of a Composite Allegory of British India*

Mindful of the fact that Partition is so essential to *Cracking India*, the earlier description of the allegorical nexus involving Lenny baby and British India lacks a crucial element — i.e. the equivalent to Partition on the novel's diegetic and allegorical level. The missing element that I suggest completes the novel's allegorical correlation on the diegetic level is that of Lenny baby's Hindu nanny Shanta, called Ayah throughout the book, and the link between the child and her nanny. Some critics have argued that the relation between Lenny baby and Ayah constitutes the core around which the whole narrative is built: "Lenny's passionate love for Ayah, and the loss of innocence that accompanies their changing relationship through the Partition, is an energetic centre to the plot" (Jha/Kumar 2004: 211).

Though utterly different, the two female characters depend and dote on each other. For the handicapped upper-class girl Lenny, Ayah secures loving care and relative freedom of movement. At the same time, the nanny Hindu nanny enables her to make acquaintance of people from the lower strata of society including their ways of life. Ayah is equally dependent on her charge Lenny, however. Her caring for the girl (and the younger brother Adi) secures her a reasonable livelihood and a sheltered existence as an integral member of Lenny's rich family. Furthermore, the handicapped girl's company functions as a kind of protective shield which enables the beautiful woman to move around Lahore rather freely, independent of elder or male supervision, "pushing the pram with the unconcern of the Hindu goddess she worships"

(CI 13). It is primarily Lenny's presence that enables Ayah to act out her sexuality, relatively protected from male molestation, unmindful of the dangers of off-leash male lustfulness.

By virtue of the functional unity constituted by Lenny baby and Ayah, the allegorical link between Lenny baby and British India also, and importantly so, includes Ayah. I suggest that *Cracking India* makes use of the two characters of Lenny baby and Ayah to form a composite allegory of British India because it enables an intensified thematization of the issue of Partition. Consequently, I assume the analysis of these two characters' perceptions and experiences yields insights into how *Cracking India* positions itself to the long-term effects of religiously connoted violence during Partition and the relation between religious alterity and violence in general.

## *From Inter-Communal Harmony to Hostility and Violence*

As Partition draws close, Lenny baby and Ayah witness the initiation and development of the process of 'hostile Othering' among friends on the basis of their different religious affiliations and its detrimental consequences: How the process begins by changing people's perceptions of things, of events, of other people, and also of friends. How friends start to disregard and forget what they have in common while they are busy with stressing the religious differences that have been there all along. How friends increasingly invest these religious differences with meaning and, increasingly detached from any specific context, assess that meaning as essentially negative. And how they, eventually, re-conceive their former friends as the 'hostile religious Other' as if that were the inevitable, most logical and natural way of relating to them. As Singh correctly observes, "the changing pattern of communal relations [...] forms an integral part" of the novel and I agree with him that the close study of this pattern should form an essential part of the narrative's overall analysis "in order to evaluate its strengths and weaknesses as an aesthetic whole" (1992: 306).

Elements of what Singh calls the "changing patterns of communal relations" are present in many layers and aspects of the narrative. Some of these elements combine to form kinds of episodic story threads. The most central one of these story threads is that of the gradual falling apart of the circle of friends around Lenny baby and Ayah. Being Ayah's constant charge, Lenny baby always accompanies her, not only witnessing but also, if only passively, partaking in her nanny's experiences. At Ayah's side, Lenny baby is affected by the deterioration of inter-communal relations as directly as Ayah when Partition draws close. She witnesses how the multi-religious circle of admirers around Ayah, which before the debates about Partition had

started was a sanctum of inter-communal harmony, begins to fall apart. Like Ayah, she at first tries to ignore, then to side-line and assuage the increasing tensions between the friends as they discuss politics with increasing fervour.

In the beginning, the inter-communal harmony is still intact. Taking along Lenny baby, then a polio-ridden child of seven, Ayah regularly meets the motley group of her admirers and friends in a park which is dominated by the statue of "Queen Victoria, cast in gunmetal, [...] majestic, massive, ugly [which] imposes the English Raj in the park" (CI 28). Lenny baby's beautiful nanny is the core of the group, a kind of fixed star that is orbited by a multitude of different planets — young men from many different social and religious backgrounds who are all subject to her attractive force and have fallen for her: the Muslims Ice-candy-man and Masseur, her most ardent admirers and the greatest rivals for her love, the Sikh zoo attendant Sher Singh, the Government House gardener and the Faletti's Hotel cook who are both Hindu, Ramzana the butcher, a Muslim, the Pashtun Sharbat Khan, and the trader Chinaman. I suggest that this multi-religious group of persons united by their love of Ayah, including Lenny baby, is an expanded allegory of British India's diversely different communities who are united by the love of their country and the dominance of the colonial rulers.

Lenny baby observes how, negligent of the multitude of properties and characteristics that differentiate them from each another, they are united by bonds of friendship and their unanimous adoration of Ayah. As the story unfolds, however, it becomes clear that this jaunty concord is a transient state of affairs bound to deteriorate as Partition is looming in the near future. Lenny recognizes how religious differences, which had been only minor, negligible aspects in the co-existence of people so diversely different in many respects, become increasingly invested with utmost importance: "I suddenly become aware of religious differences. It is sudden. One day everybody is themselves – and the next day they are Hindus, Muslim, Sikh, Christian" (CI 101). At the same time, as Lenny remarks, "people shrink, dwindling into symbols" (CI 101). She laments that what used to be her "all-encompassing Ayah" is now "also a token," a "Hindu" who is "carried away by a renewed devotional fervor [and] expends a small fortune in joss-sticks, flowers and sweets on the gods and goddesses in the temples" (CI 101). Apart from Ayah, there are many others who, like the Muslim cook Imam Din and the servant Yousaf, turn "into religious zealots" (CI 101). Religious affiliation becomes the most important marker of identity, eclipsing all others. Through Lenny baby's eyes, the adult narrator describes this development as if it were a kind of contagious disease, which infects and diminishes

everyone who is exposed to it. Lenny considers all around her "crammed into a narrow religious slot" and remarks that "they too are diminished, as are Jinnah and Iqbal, Ice-candy-man and Masseur" (CI 102).

Lenny baby witnesses that the process wherein religious alterity is assigned utmost significance affects everyone around her results in increased relevance of hierarchical structures and differences, and less humanity: While the untouchables of the sweeper-family become "ever more untouchable as they are entrenched deeper in their low Hindu caste," the Brahmin families "like Nehru, are dehumanized by their lofty caste and caste-marks" (CI 102). Subtle hierarchies also become recognizable among Christians as "English Christians [...] look down their noses upon the [...] Anglo-Indian[s], who look down theirs on the [...] Indian-Christian[s], who look down upon all non-Christians" (CI 102). Even her family and she herself, Lenny baby realizes, cannot escape that process and instead find themselves "reduced to irrelevant nomenclatures — we are Parsee" (CI 102).

"Only the group around Ayah," claims Lenny contently, "remains unchanged. Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Parsee are, as always, unified around her" (*CI* 105). Soon, however, Lenny witnesses how even her nanny's admirers, while engaging with increasing fervour in the political debates on India's independence, the departure of the British colonizers and, above all, the partitioning of the country along religious lines, increasingly perceive each other exclusively in terms of religious categories. The more the friends address and refer to one another mindful of their religious differences while discussing the political situation, and the more they trifle with, use and adopt notorious stereotypes about the respective 'Other,' the less they perceive one another as friends. Gradually, situations and characteristics of people that once were considered as funny and 'just a joke,' become invested with malign meaning and turn joylessly serious. Even harmless jokes add to the increasingly unpleasant atmosphere, drawing as they do on stereotypes, clichés and prejudices.

> As soon as I am settled, and Ayah's absorption is back with the group, the butcher continues the interrupted conversation: "You Hindus eat so much beans and cauliflower I'm not surprised your yogis levitate. They probably fart their way right up to heaven!" He slips his palm beneath his armpit and, flapping his other arm like a chicken wink, generates a succession of fart-like sounds. I think he's so funny I laugh until my tummy hurts. But Ayah is not laughing. "Stop it," she says to me in a harsh somber whisper. Sher Singh, who had found the rude sounds as amusing, checks himself abruptly. I notice his covert glance slide in Masseur's direction and, looking a little foolish, he suddenly tries to frown. I twist on Ayah's lap to look at Masseur. He is staring impassively at the grinning butcher, and Butcher's face, confronted by his stolid disfavor, turns ugly. (CI 105-6)

While they seem harmless enough since they tend to make fun at the clichés they use, they at the same time perpetuate and reaffirm them, suggesting that their basic assumptions are commonly known and considered to contain a kernel of truth. As Lenny baby remarks drily, there are not only "Sikh jokes" but also "Hindu, Muslim, Parsee and Christian jokes" (CI 104). In their telling, these jokes reveal the way how former friends, who used to make their religious differences a subject of jovial ridicule and laughter, turn into opponents that are intransigently, irreconcilably different. Lenny baby's strategy of ignoring the newly emerging malicious and hostile undertones is bound to fail. As the discussions get ever more heated, the erstwhile friends lose sight of what unites them, addressing each other as representatives of their religious community instead of individuals. Simultaneously, they begin to forget all the many differences and details that make them diversely different. Instead, they increasingly see each others as remote-controlled representatives of perceived homogenous religious communities engaged in a hostile struggle over political power.

The only thing holding them together now is their joint admiration of Ayah. But even Ayah's uniting power is dwindling as her being a Hindu increasingly eclipses all her other features. As a Hindu, Ayah feels less and less comfortable in a city with a Muslim majority which is rumoured to become part of Pakistan. She utterly dislikes the fact that she is exposed to political discussions about the Hindu-Muslim antagonism even among her friends. In order to keep the situation from worsening, she threatens them with her future absence: "If all you talk of is nothing but this Hindu-Muslim business, I'll stop coming to the park" (CI 101). Ice-candy-man, always eager to please Ayah, avers that its' "just a discussion among friends" and that "such talk helps clear the air" (CI 101). But his assurances ring hollow and untrustworthy after the acrid word-exchanges before. And they appear to have even less substance under the impression of the gradual and "subtle change in the Queen's Garden," which Lenny baby perceives.

> The Sikhs [...] are keeping mostly to themselves. Masseur leans into the group and placing a firm hand on my arm drags me away. We walk past a Muslim family. With their burka-veiled women they too sit apart. [...] A group of smooth-skinned Brahmins and their pampered male offspring form a tight circle of supercilious exclusivity near ours. (CI 104-5)

The drastic change in mood within the group of friends is mirrored by the change of their habitual meeting place. Abandoning the Arcadian setting of the Queen's Garden, they now meet at the "wrestler's restaurant" (CI 137-141) — a place whose very name echoes the heated political debates which the friends lead while eating there. By now, they persistently and with

hostile undertones foreground their religious differences in all their arguments. Occasional and diffident efforts of assuring each other of their mutual friendship irrespective of their heated arguments ring hollow and prove to be futile due to the already deeply entrenched anger and mutual mistrust.

> I try not to inhale, but I must; the charged air about our table distils poisonous insights. Blue envy, green avidity, the gray and black stirrings of predators and the incipient distillation of fear in their prey. A slimy gray-green balloon forms behind my shut lids. There is something so dangerous about the tangible colors the passions around me have assumed that I blink open my eyes and sit up. (*CI* 141)

Continuously confronted with the friends' mutual scepticism, distrust and eventually hostility, Lenny baby eventually acknowledge the ugly reality of communal hatred around her. Soon after this last discussion, Lahore becomes the setting of large-scale violence, arson and looting, with Sikh-Hindu mobs attacking Muslim *mohallas* (neighbourhoods) and vice versa, "the skyline of the old walled city ablaze, and people shattering each other with blood" (CI 144). While the city is burning, and people are killing each other, invoking an inevitable enmity due to religious alterity, British India is finally partitioned. "I'm Pakistani," Lenny baby comments laconically, "in a snap," "just like that" (CI 150). In Lenny baby's eyes, "things have become topsy-turvy." (CI 157) There are no more excursions to the park and no more meetings at the wrestler's restaurant. Instead, Lenny baby attests to overt "dissension in the ranks of Ayah's admirers," who now come to see her only "in twos or threes, or singly" on the veranda of Lenny baby's home (CI 157). Some of Ayah's Muslim admirers, "Butcher and the restaurant wrestler," even stop seeing her altogether. Also among the absentees is, much to Lenny baby's surprise, Ice-candy-man, who had been one of Ayah's most ardent and tenacious admirers apart from Masseur. Despite his being a Muslim, Ice-candy-man had always countered any anti-Hindu and anti-Sikh baiting uttered by the Muslims among their friends for the sake of favouring the Hindu woman.

He eventually abandons this position, however, after having received the information that his relatives were mutilated and massacred among all the other Muslim passengers of a refugee train reaching Lahore.

> Ice-candy-man [...] is breathless, reeking of sweat and dust, and his frantic eyes scan the group. They rest for an instant on the Sikh, and flutter back to us. "A train from Gurdaspur has just come in," he announces, panting. "Everyone in it is dead. Butchered. They are all Muslim. There are no young women among the dead! Only two gunny-bags full of women's breasts!" Ice-candy-man's grip on the handlebars [of his bicycle] is so tight

> that his knuckles bulge whitely in the pale light. The kohl lining his eyes has spread, forming hollow, skull-like shadows: and as he raises his arm to wipe the perspiration crawling down his face, his glance once again flits over Sher Singh. "I was expecting relatives…For three days…For twelve hours each day…I waited for that train!" (*CI* 159)

Full of horror, fury and grieve, Ice-candy-man craves for someone he can blame for the atrocities committed by nameless strangers, someone on whom he can wreak his anger. He finds that someone in Sher Singh, the wispy Sikh zoo attendant whom he had assured not long ago that to him bonds of friendship were far more important than religious affiliation: "'So what if you're a Sikh? I'm first a friend to my friends…And an enemy to their enemies…And then a Mussulman! God and the politicians have enough servers. So, I serve my friends'" (CI 131). Now these assurances are forgotten and the former friend is nothing to him but a member of the religious community of Sikhs, which he holds responsible for the train massacre. Ice-candy-man and Sher Singh have now become irreconcilable antagonists, judging and fearing each other on the basis of atrocities committed by strangers who happen to belong to the same religious communities as they.

> I look at the zoo attendant. Sher Singh is staring at the popsicle man. His pupils are black and distended. His checked shirt is open at the throat, and his narrow pigeon-chest is going up and down, up and down, in the eerie veranda light. (CI 159)

After this instance, Ice-candy-man disappears and joins the marauding and killing Muslim mobs in the streets of the city. He only visits once, having "acquired an unpleasant swagger and a strange way of looking at Hari and Moti [Hindus]," being "full of bravado and […] stories" and has his mouth curled "in a contemptuous sneer" while he boasts of his adventures as a member of the killing and marauding mobs in the streets of Lahore (CI 165). He openly confesses that he was part of the mob that attacked and chased away Sher Singh and his family and that he no longer feels any qualms about attacking and killing life-long acquaintances and friends.

> I lose my senses when I think of the mutilated bodies on that train from Gurdaspur…that night I went mad, I tell you! I lobbed grenades through the windows of Hindus and Sikhs I'd known all my life! I hated their guts…I want to kill someone for each of the breasts they cut off the Muslim women… The penises!" (CI 166)

After Ice-candy-man's confession, it is obvious that the circle of admirers around Ayah is irretrievable broken. According to their religious affiliation, each of the former friends either becomes part of the Muslim mobs like Ice-candy-man, joins the Hindu and Sikh refugees leaving for India or converts to Islam to obviate attacks by Muslim mobs. The Hindu Ayah, no longer sheltered by her admirers' benevolent care untroubled by religious differences, is now

left behind, reduced to a poor, unmarried woman who has no relatives in Lahore. The only member of the circle who does not forsake her, but proposes to marry her instead, is the Muslim Masseur with whom she has had a serious relationship for some time at that point. The plans are spoiled, however, as Masseur is found dead, having been hacked to death, in a gunnysack beside the road. (CI 185) Abandoned by her closest friends who have fled Lahore and bereft of her murdered husband, Ayah now "trusts no one" and no longer receives any visitors (CI 188).

Shortly afterwards, she is brutally abducted by a mob led by Ice-candy-man. Her formerly most tenacious suitor, who had been rebuffed by Ayah and defeated in his endeavours by his rival Masseur, now takes advantage of his position of power as part of the Muslim mob over the defenceless Hindu Ayah (CI 188-195). Confronted with the mob's request for surrendering them over all remaining Hindus, the members of the Sethi household try to hide Ayah, pretending she has gone to Amritsar. Lenny baby, however, is incapable of subduing her "truth-infected tongue" and, credulously yielding to Ice-candy-man's deceitful entreaties, betrays Ayah's presence.

> Ice-candy-man is crouched before me. "Don't be scared, Lenny baby," he says. "I'm here." And putting his arms around me he whispers, so that only I can hear: "I'll protect Ayah with my life! You know I will... I know she's here. Where is she?" And dredging from some foul truthful depth in me a fragment of overheard conversation that I had not registered at the time, I say: "On the roof—or in one of the godowns..." Ice-candy-man's face undergoes a subtle change before my eyes, and as he slowly uncoils his lank frame into an upright position, I know I have betrayed Ayah. ... There is no judgement in their eyes—no reproach—only stone-faced incredulity. (194)

By telling the truth, she unwillingly becomes the traitor of her beloved nanny, who is then abducted by the Muslim mob, subjected to rape and humiliation. Thus, Lenny baby learns the bitter lesson that supposedly universal values such as honesty turn dubious or even invalid under certain conditions — like in the historical phase of Partition. Her compulsion to being honest, Lenny comes to realize, is of no use or worth at all at a time when the ability to lie decides over life and death.

As a consequence of her honesty, Lenny baby experiences how the same men who had hitherto professed to admire and respect the beautiful Ayah, treating her like the inviolate goddess both ruling over and being at the core of their circle, now carry her away like a piece of loot. Once the cherished object of their veneration, Lenny baby's "all-compassing Ayah" is now

reduced to a woman whose will and life — because she is a Hindu — are rendered worthless as she is completely at the mercy of the rampant Muslim mob.

> They drag Ayah out. They drag her by her arms stretched taut, and her bare feet—that want to move backwards—are forced forward instead. Her lips are drawn away from her teeth, and the resisting curve of her throat opens her mouth like the dead child's screamless mouth. Her violet sari slips off her shoulder, and her breasts strain at her sari-blouse stretching the cloth so that the white stitching at the seam shows. A sleeve tears under her arm. The men drag her in grotesque strides to the cart and their harsh hands, supporting her with careless intimacy, lift her into it. Four men stand pressed against her, propping her body upright, their lips stretched in triumphant grimaces. (CI 195)

Due to Ayah's brutal abduction, the functional unity between Lenny baby and her nanny is eventually broken. This separation is one of the key moments of Lenny's painful initiation into the realities of adult life as it makes her feel boundless guilt and irretrievable loss, and experience the relativity of values such as loyalty and honesty. The experiences of the two fictional characters echo those of the multitudes of diversely different people who before Partition jointly constituted British India, contributing to its nature in different ways, but who due to their categorization and separation along religious lines were robbed of their role in a joint endeavour and diminished in their complexity as human beings. The crucial link between British India's attainment of *swaraj* ('self-rule') and its being partitioned into two separate nation-states both conditions and mirrors the breaking up of the nearly symbiotic unity of Lenny baby and Ayah. The cracking up of the Lenny baby-Ayah-unity echoes the 'cracking of India.'

Ayah's fate after her abduction only adds to the already bleak picture and further increases Lenny baby's pessimistic attitude regarding the worth of friendship and honesty. As Lenny baby finds out, Ice-candy man brings Ayah to Lahore's red-light district Hira Mandi, installs himself as her pimp and eventually marries her in order to ensure that no one takes her away from him. For months after the abduction, he "played the drums when she danced [and] counted money while drunks, peddlers, sahibs, and cutthroats used her like a sewer" (CI 262), as Lenny baby's Godmother sums up the state of things sardonically when she confronts Ice-candy-man. Not only Ice-candy man, however, but most other men who Lenny baby had thought of as her nanny's friends, abuse her: "They have shamed her. [...] Sharbat Khan and Ice-candy-man and Imam Din and Cousin's cook and the butcher and the other men she counted among her friends and admirers" (CI 266).

As has been pointed out by many scholars such as Gyanendra Pandey, Urvashi Butalia and Veena Das, a vision of the relation between Independence and Partition and their relative importance like the one in *Cracking India* is in stark contrast to most historiographic accounts. Unlike the latter, *Cracking India* clearly projects the gains of British India's independence as spoilt and positively eclipsed by the violence that escalated as a result of the country's being partitioned along religious lines into India and Pakistan. The novel thereby prompts two grim conclusions. Firstly, it suggests that the two states formed under the sway of these key moments were based on inter-communal mistrust, hostility and violence and will continuously be riddled with them. Secondly, it suggests that any child who like Lenny baby was initiated into the adult world when it was pervaded by deteriorating social relationships, the invalidation of humanistic values and the sway of unscrupulous violence, is prone to dismiss the idea of the harmonious co-existence of people from different religious communities and to have a decidedly pessimistic outlook onto the future.

I furthermore claim that by having British India allegorically represented by the transitory unity formed by a child and her nanny, a unity which is bound to end with the child's accomplished maturation, the novel implies that Independence and even a kind of internal separation or reorganization was inevitable. What does not follow from the constitution of *Cracking India*'s allegory of British India, however, is that the country's reorganization would necessarily have had to be as uncompromising, violent and traumatic as it turned out to be.[139]

## IV.1.iv 'Ice-Candy-Men' — Denouncing the Politician's Role in Fostering Violence

Instead, the novel suggests that the escalation of violence between members of religious communities resulted from the fact that both Indian politicians' and British colonizers' argued along religious lines, invested religious alterities with political meaning, and ruthlessly manipulated people's existing prejudices and fears related to religious alterities for the sake of implementing their own political schemes. When *Cracking India* was originally published, its title was *Ice-Candy-Man*. Even though the new title aptly refers to the novel's historical setting, it

[139] The alternative vision of a peaceful, consensual reorganisation of the body politic is implied on the novel's diegetic level by its projection of an optional though unfulfilled version of Ayah's separation from Lenny baby. In this version, Ayah would have left Lahore for Amritsar with her Muslim husband Masseur instead of having been abducted and abused by a Muslim mob.

belittles the relevance of the character of Ice-Candy-Man — he is never given a real name in the novel — and "blurs his symbolic role" (Ross 1996: 185).

*Cracking India* is a severe indictment of the foul play and deceitful, self-interested dealings of politicians, a trope that may be found in most Partition narratives. In *Cracking India*, the character Ice-Candy-Man is cast as the epitome of what can be called the stereotype of a shady politician: He is a dubitable, loud-mouthed, obtrusive and ominous person who manipulates the people around him, even his close friends, changes his loyalties according to what pleases him best or is of most use to him, and is eager to take advantage of the naïveté, weakness and misery of others. Selling popsicles in summer, he masquerades as an enlightened seer in winter and cheats credulous, help-seeking people. Helping his Sikh friend to get rid of his Muslim tenants for the sheer fun of it, he fatally attacks the former friend and his family after Partition, as he now considers himself a member of the Muslim community and shares their hatred against what are now considered Sikh 'outsiders' in Pakistani Lahore. Wooing the Hindu Ayah before Partition, he brutally abducts her after Partition, turns her into a prostitute in Lahore's red-light district Hira Mandi and only marries her when he gets to know that Lenny's mother has arranged to liberate her.

Ice-Candy-Man is not the only character in *Cracking India*, however, who is associated with that uncanny, slick 'icy-ness,' representing what Sidhwa considers "the 'icy,' unstable quality of politicians who determine the fate of those they rule" (Ross 1996: 185). Throughout the narrative it becomes clear that *Cracking* India blames those in power, the British colonizers and the politicians in general not only for the occurrence of Partition but also for the large-scale violence between Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs. Politicians and their doings are presented as the root of all dissension, mistrust and hostility, be that on the micro-level of a circle of friends or on the macro-level of states. The novel contains an especially vitriolic indictment of the British politicians and administrators who are described as sly and duplicitous "icy card sharks" (CI 169). The British colonizers' foul play is blamed first and foremost for India's Partition and the suffering it entailed for millions of North Indians.

> The Punjab has been divided by the *icy card-sharks* [emphasis Escherle] dealing out the land village by village, city by city, wheeling and dealing and doling favors. For now the tide is turned—and the Hindus are being favoured over the Muslims by the remnants of the Raj. Now that its objective to divide India is achieved, the British favour Nehru over Jinnah. Nehru is Kashmiri; they grant him Kashmir. Spurning logic, defying rationale, ignoring the consequence of bequeathing a Muslim state to the Hindus, while Jinnah futilely protests: "Statesmen cannot eat their words!" Statesmen do. (*CI* 169)

Even Ghandi, usually associated with his non-partisan, non-violent struggle for freedom, is put into the same 'icy' category, although not in such a condemning way. During the fictitious encounter between Lenny baby and Ghandi in Lahore, the girl is amused by his continuous knitting and talk about bowel movements, utterly disregarding his importance in the political arena of the day. Lenny the adult narrator infers, however, that Gandhi was far from harmless but really of the same 'icy' ilk as all the other politicians: "It wasn't until some years later — when I realized the full scope and dimension of the massacres—that I comprehended the concealed nature of the ice lurking deep beneath the hypnotic and dynamic femininity of Ghandi's non-violent exterior."[140] Ghandi, too, along with other Indian politicians and the British colonizers, is made responsible for the fact that "within three months seven million Muslims and five million Hindus and Sikhs are uprooted in the largest and most terrible exchange of population known to history" (CI 169). They, *Cracking India* suggests, are to be held responsible for inciting and not preventing the mass migration and the massacres accompanying Partition.

## *The Indispensability of Women to Maintaining Societal Peace*

However, the novel projects an alternative, or rather complementary dimension to the relentless politicization of religious alterity and the escalation of violence as the necessary consequence. This alternative dimension is based on the stark contrast, which *Cracking India* sets up between the roles of men and those of women. As the preceding section shows, the novel depicts most men as indulging in the sly game of politics, molesting women, holding long pointless or hateful speeches, partaking in destruction, looting, arson, mutilation, rape and killing. As Asha Sen points out, *Cracking India* counters these narratives most importantly with "the solidarity of different communities of women who negotiate with and resist patriarchal confinement" and the men's ways of making history a tale of 'hostile Othering' and violence (1998: 202). Through the eyes of the young female focaliser Lenny baby, the novel prominently thematizes the fate of women during Partition, thousands of whom were raped and killed,

[140] *CI* 96. Interestingly, Gandhi's great antagonist Jinnah, often referred to as the "father of Pakistan," is not described in similarly negative terms, although it is usually he whom most historians blame for the actual coming true of Partition. Sidhwa has pointed out in several interviews that she considers this as an utterly one-sided, unfair approach to history and to both the person and the politician Jinnah, and that she intended to write back to that Indian and British historiographic tradition, at least on the fictional level. See for example her following statement: "I felt, in *Ice-Candy-Man*, I was just redressing in a small way a very grievous wrong that has been done to Jinnah and Pakistanis by many Indian and British writers" (Montenegro 1989: 532).

mutilated and abducted. Apart from Ayah's fate, *Cracking India* includes many other stories of women's experiences during Partition. One of them is the story of Hamida who had been abducted by Sikhs and is taken on as Lenny's new nanny after Ayah's abduction.

Women are not only presented as helpless, passive victims in *Cracking India* — on the contrary. Most of the novel's women characters are peacemakers and philanthropists, both cunning and brave pillars of their communities, who exemplify the nature of female resistance to the patriarchy, which is shown to essentially maintain the process of 'hostile Othering' on the basis of religious alterity and thereby reifies a social order wherein the tendency to violence is omnipresent. It shows how female characters like Ayah, Lenny's mother and Lenny's two aunts, Electric aunt and Godmother, despite the men's doings, against their will or without their knowing try to preserve the peaceful co-existence of friends and neighbours disturbed by increasing inter-communal tensions, help neighbours and fellow-citizens to escape from marauding mobs, save abducted women, and rebuild the community torn to pieces by inter-communal hatred and violence. The both courageous and deviant actions of the women in *Cracking India*, asserts Sen, suggest "a strength and reseilience [sic.] outside the bonds of patriarchal subservience" (1998: 203).

Although both Lenny and Ayah witness and even experience great loss and pain, neither one of the two female protagonists is merely a victim. According to Sen, it is "Lame Lenny's awareness of the patriarchal impulse to the various discourses that confine her and her gradual understanding of the solidarity between different women that surround her that helps effect subaltern agency" (1998: 202). Both Lenny baby and Ayah are aware of their power and they wield it deftly whenever they get the chance. As Fawzia Afzal Khan has pointed out, it is "right from the beginning that Lenny and her Ayah form a bond that symbolically resists attempts by an outside, male world to subjugate them" (cited in Sen 1998: 204). Lenny, though a handicapped girl, finds out that her sharp wit, her power of observation and her ability to see through others' exteriors make her superior to most people around her — including males. Ayah, on the other hand, is well aware of the power with which her beauty and feminine sexuality endows her. She takes advantage of the men's desire for her, enjoying the affection, the many pleasures and the numerous gifts they lavish on her. But she also uses it for other, less self-interested purposes. For a long time, she succeeds in preserving relative peace in the multi-religious circle of her admirers and preventing them from falling prey to the frenzy of communal hatred.

*Cracking India* does not cast all its female characters either as innocent victims or benevolent heroines fighting for the general good, however. They are all shown to have their own moral shortcomings and spots of bother. This is most visible in the character of Rodabai, mostly referred to as Godmother in the novel. Subhash Chandra describes Rodabai's character concisely thus: "Godmother's personality sparkles with razor-sharp wit, her indefatigable stamina, her boundless love for Lenny, and her social commitment. Her sense of humour, [...] and her power to mould, modify and order not only individuals but even the system, when she so desires, earn her respect and admiration of people around her" (Chandra 1996: 179). As Chandra rightly observes, Godmother is "endowed with profound understanding of human existence and [...] wisdom" and also possesses "the power to annihilate the adversary" (ibid.). At the same time, however, the caring and powerful Godmother is shown as vicious and remorseless matron who treats her own sister, aptly called either Mini Aunty or Slavesister throughout the novel, like a slave, oppressing, exploiting, scolding and humiliating her. Presumably that is also the reason why Godmother, who manipulates and annihilates people according to her will, is attributed features recalling the 'icy-ness' of the politicians in the novel.[141]

Thus, while the narrative presents the female part of the history of Partition, both their plight so rarely recorded by historians and their countering of the destruction instigated primarily by men, *Cracking India* does not paint a black and white picture. Instead, the novel shows women to be as capable of cruelty and abuse of power as men. The important difference *Cracking India* suggests is, however, that men are far more susceptible to violence and power abuse than women, while women are prone to use their vital beneficial powers regarding social and inter-personal relations to a larger extent than men. Furthermore, the novel implies that women are more willing than most men to wield their powers irrespective of boundaries between religious communities.

In *Cracking India*, it is the female characters' capability of inter-personal compassion, their maintenance of social bonds and their efforts at re-establishing these severed bonds after a time of crisis that enable the return of the community's traumatized members to relative peace. Sidhwa's novel thereby projects something like the community of women whose boundaries cut

[141] Rodabai is described to be "in cold rage" (CI 259), to speak "in a deceptively cool voice" (260), to look at her adversary Ice-Candy-Man with eyes that are "dispassionate. Cold," and to move her hands "in a coldly significant gesture" (276).

across those of religious communities and whose members care for each other and the wellbeing of the larger community irrespective of religious affiliations or other markers of difference.

## IV.1.v Religion as Poison for Inter-Personal Relationships

Lenny baby's observations and experiences of religiously connoted Partition violence crucially influence her maturation process, they form her view of the relation between religious alterity and violence and result in both the child focalizer's and the adult narrator's conclusion that "one man's religion is another man's poison" (CI 125). Because *Cracking India* projects Lenny baby's maturation process as mirroring British India's 'coming of age,' I argue that the novel implies the same analogy regarding the detrimental influence of Lenny baby's experiences during Partition on her adult self's attitude to religion. Just as the novel shows that the grown woman Lenny has interiorized the idea that religious alterity 'poisons' inter-personal relationships as a result of her childhood experiences, *Cracking India* suggests that the two independent states India and Pakistan and their citizens have equally internalized the link between religious alterity and violence due to the conditions of their 'coming of age.' The Partition narrative of *Cracking India* thus illustrates what many recent historians and literary scholars, among them Arora Neena, have pointed out:

> Partition did not solve any problems; it created more. [...] Cities were changed forever; families torn apart and individuals' fates transformed for the worse. Communalism became entrenched in the politico-religious consciousness of the people. The psyche of the nation was wounded. (12)

The image that *Cracking India* paints of India's and Pakistan's formation in the past simultaneously functions as a grim prophesy. It implies that both the states' futures and those of their citizens are bound to remain haunted by religiously connoted violence.

In sum, I argue that by pointing out its considerable liability to being used as an excuse for violence, *Cracking India* projects a close relation between religion and violence. It is not, however, an indictment of religion as root of violence, either religion in general or any particular religion. Neither does the novel suggest that the mere existence of religious alterity causes violence. Instead, it implies that it is the exploitation of religion's 'poisonous,' violent aspects and the process of redefining religious alterity in terms of mistrust and hostility that produces violence.

The novel suggests two crucial causative factors for religious alterity resulting in violence: Firstly, it stresses the relevance of radical socio-political change — exemplified by India's independence and the country's partition along religious lines in 1947. Secondly, it refers to the investment of religious differences with socio-cultural and political meaning — i.e. the relatedness of political rights, privileges and power, economic advantages and social prestige to a person's belonging to a certain religious community. *Cracking India* suggests that human beings will resort to religiously connoted violence against members of 'other' communities in phases of socio-political upheaval when existing religious alterities are newly invested with political and socio-cultural meanings or when established meanings and values are no longer universally valid and are re-negotiated.

# IV.2 "All that matters is what people believe."[142] Truths, Beliefs and the Primacy of Perspective in Shashi Tharoor's *Riot*

> History, the old saying goes, is not a web woven with innocent hands. (R 269)

Shashi Tharoor's *Riot* (2001) is a metahistoriographic detective novel about the history, historiography, contemporary context and implications of communalism and communal riots in present-day India. Tharoor (*1956) was a top-notch diplomat at the United Nations until 2007, his last post being that of Under-Secretary General for Communications and Public Information. Afterwards, he entered Indian politics and became the Indian Minister of State for External Affairs in 2009, a post from which he resigned in 2010. Today, he is India's Union Minister of State for Human Resource Development. Apart from following his career as a diplomat and politician, he has also been a prolific journalist and author of several fictional as well as factual publications.[143] Having "lived outside India for over twenty-five years," Tharoor nevertheless insists on his unchanged "Indian identity" (Stummer 123, 124) and his entitlement to as well as qualification for commenting on contemporary prevalent issues in Indian culture, society and politics. That is exactly what he does in *Riot* which as metahistoriographic fiction both represents and comments on historiography on communalism in India.

Being an assemblage of seventy-seven meticulously dated but seemingly arbitrarily ordered 'documents' authored by different characters[144], the novel tells the story of a fictional riot in the fictitious North Indian town of Zalilgarh (Uttar Pradesh). Set in 1989, it uses the specific historical context of the riots accompanying the Ram Janmabhoomi temple campaign to discuss the issue of violent clashes between Hindus and Muslims in particular and the question of how religious alterity and violence relate to each other in general.

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[142] Statement made by the character of Professor Mohammed Sarwar in an interview with Randy Diggs (R 181).

[143] His fictional writings include the novels *The Great Indian Novel* (1989), *Show Business* (1992), and *Riot* (2001) and the short story collection *The Five Dollar Smile and Other Stories* (1990). His factual writings comprise various historical, economic political and socio-cultural essays on India including *Reasons of State* (1982), *India: From Midnight to the Millennium* (1997), *Nehru: The Invention of India* (2003), *Bookless in Baghdad* (2005), *The Elephant, the Tiger, and the Cell Phone: Reflections on India - The Emerging 21st-Century Power* (2007), *Shadows Across the Playing Field: Sixty Years of India-Pakistan Cricket* (2009, along with Shaharyar Khan), and *Pax Indica: India and the World of the 21st Century* (2012).

[144] For a complete list of all the 77 'documents' that make up the novel see Appendix 1.

The eponymous riot occurs during one of the Ram Sila Puja (consecrated brick collection) processions, which were organized all over India as part of the Ram Janmabhoomi temple campaign. During the riot, someone murders the twenty-four year old US-American Priscilla Hart, an employee of the local NGO for population control HELP-US. Although it remains unclear why Priscilla was murdered, it becomes evident that she had made several enemies for at least two reasons. Firstly, she had incurred the hatred of those people who opposed the work she did for the NGO such as distributing contraception pills and recommending abortion to poor women. Secondly, she had had a secret love affair with Zalilgarh's married district manager V. Lakshman, whose wife Geetha, unbeknownst to the lovers, finds out about it.

After Priscilla's death, the journalist Randy Diggs, who is the fictitious New York Journal's correspondent to Delhi, is commissioned to write a detailed feature about the incident. Accompanied by the murdered woman's parents Katharine and Rudyard, who want to visit the place where their daughter died, Diggs goes to Zalilgarh in order to investigate the details for his story. During his many interviews with people such as Priscilla's former colleagues at the NGO, her former employer Shankar Das, the district manager Lakshman, the superintendent of police Gurinder Singh, and the local Hindu-nationalist leader Ram Charan Gupta, it turns out, however, that the riddle of who murdered Priscilla cannot be solved beyond doubt. Furthermore, Diggs' investigation reveals that the solution of Priscilla's murder really is of secondary importance, at least to Zalilgarh's inhabitants. Instead it points out that what at first appeared to be nothing but the murder's contextual background is the real topic of *Riot*.[145] As the story evolves, it becomes increasingly clear that the novel's focus is on exploring the history of the fictitious riot in order to problematize the general history of communal violence in India, which Tharoor called "the Hindu/Muslim-collision" (Tharoor and Myers 3).

The novel's summary shows that *Riot* contains two closely linked major story lines — the 'Priscilla story line' featuring several elements of a detective novel and the metahistoriographic

[145] In a talk given at the Carnegie Council in 2001, Tharoor feels urged to describe the historical background of his novel as follows: "In 1989, the Ram Shila puja was announced, a call to villages all over India to bake and consecrate bricks to the Lord Ram and bring them to a central point in each town, march to the district headquarters of each district, and then collect all the bricks eventually in Ayodhya to build a temple there. During this time a number of villages, particularly in northern and central India, were seized with this madness, bricks were baked, and the processions to collect these bricks became inevitably a focus of communal tension. Somewhere between a dozen and twenty riots broke out in 1989, in each of which a handful of people were killed, but cumulatively it was quite calamitous" (Tharoor and Myers 4).

'riot story line.' Regarding to its form, the novel is a kind of "file folder,"[146] in which both story lines are equally embedded. The "file folder" contains an assemblage of individual 'documents' from a great variety of perspectives such as newspaper clippings, excerpts from diary entries, scrapbooks and letters (predominantly by Priscilla to her New York based friend Cindy Valeriani), interview transcripts and even poems. As Peter Stummer points out, the novel's perspectival diversity is echoed by the variety of its individual components' "layout and [...] typographical make-up" on the one hand and their stylistic features on the other hand. The latter "range from highly academic language [...] to the Superintendent's tough-guy lingo and the faulty English of Priscilla's superior in the HELP-US organization" (R 123).

Confronted with *Riot*'s plurality of formal and stylistic features and the multiplicity of perspectives, readers might expect the guidance of a distinguishable superordinate narrating entity which comments on and contextualizes the individual text units. *Riot* lacks this kind of authoritative voice, however. Neither is there any information on who assembled and arranged the documents, and why. Instead, the novel features many voices on the story level that keep alternating. Both story lines and the pluralistic perspectival structure are essentially concerned with establishing the truth of past events. Due to the fact that they fail miserably at doing so, however, they illustrate "the unknowability of history" and "the unknowability of the truth" instead (Tharoor and Myers 3). Both aspects are considered as prototypical of postmodern fiction. This point was first put forward by Linda Hutcheon in her publications *The Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction* (1988) and *The Politics of Postmodernism* (1989). While her claim that historiographic metafiction is the prototype of postmodern fiction has been contended in its absoluteness, the relevance of historiographic metafiction and its central topics for postmodern fiction is widely acknowledged. Some commentators have described *Riot* as "truly post-modern novel" for reasons such as its metahistoriographic elements, its complex perspectival structure and stylistic and formal variety (Narayan 65). As the label 'postmodern' does nothing to enable a precise description of *Riot*, however, it will not be used. Obviously, *Riot* addresses the problematic status of historical truth, its ontological and epistemological issues, both on its content level and through its formal, structural, stylistic and perspectival design. This suggests that an analysis of the role that the novel assigns to 'historical truth' with

[146] Lorraine Adames, "Carried Away—Riot: A Love Story by Shashi Tharoor" (*Washington Post*, Oct. 28 2001), cited in Stummer 123.

respect to the problem of communal violence is relevant to answering the central question of *Riot*'s position concerning the link between religious alterity and violence.

I argue that the diplomat, politician and writer Tharoor uses *Riot* in order to promote the view that it is not religion per se, any particular religion such as Hinduism or Islam, or the existence of religious alterity, which are at the root of the violence between Hindus and Muslims. Instead, he attempts to underline through *Riot* the great relevance of history and the exploitation of its diverging interpretations and meanings in and for the present.[147] This involves two aspects: Firstly, the novel illustrates how history is liable to being manipulated and exploited for achieving political goals. *Riot* consequently blames the abuse of history as a weapon by politicians of different factions for the production and maintenance of communal divisions, hostility and violence. Secondly, *Riot* suggests that it is paramount to 'defuse' the weapon of history by equally including and mediating between all truth versions in a moderate democratic debate. This strategy, *Riot* implies, could enable a broad consensus concerning the interpretation of history and its meaning in the present which again might eventually solve the problem of communalism and put an end to communal violence.

In order to prove my thesis, I will analyse in detail how the novel's content as well as its generic and structural properties illustrate and discuss the relation between history and historiography on the one hand and "Hindu/Muslim-collisions" on the other hand. This requires, firstly, a close look at the contents, narrative features and functions of *Riot*'s two story lines, how they are related and to which purpose. Secondly, I will analyse in detail the novel's perspectival structure: its individual elements, their relation to each other, and the perspectival structure's contribution to the novel's position regarding the troubled history of communal violence.

## IV.2.i *Riot* as a Metahistoriographic Detective Novel

Despite their equal interest in establishing the truth about past events the two story lines differ due to their generic features: With regard to the 'Priscilla story line,' *Riot* is primarily a

[147] A similar connection between the potential manipulation of history the one hand and its liability to exploitation for supporting political schemes and fomenting communal tensions on the other hand is made in Gita Hariharan's novel *In Times of Siege* (2003). The protagonist of Hariharan's novel Shiv Murty is a Delhi-based history professor, who, similar to *Riot*'s professor Sarwar, concentrates on medieval history. He becomes the target of Hindu-nationalist agitation and even physical attacks because of his supposedly inaccurate and distorted writings on the twelfth-century poet and reformer Basavanna.

detective novel where the journalist Diggs takes on the role of the detective who investigates Priscilla's murder.[148] *Riot* features all the necessary ingredients of a detective novel, ranging from the obligatory murder, the seemingly innocent victim (Priscilla), the secret lover (Lakshman), the shrewd detective (Diggs), several dubious suspects (e.g. Gupta and Makhan Singh), all of which have telling names which point to their status as stock-characters,[149] and a complex situation which poses an intellectual riddle.[150] Furthermore, like in most classical detective stories, most characters lack depth of character and complexity as they are far too stereotypical to be authentic. This is quite common in detective novels as the main interest is in solving the intellectual riddle posed by the murder and not in character development. Consequently, readers are likely not to get emotionally involved either with the potential perpetrators or with the victim and instead to focus on their analytic and intellectual capabilities in order to solve the riddle.

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[148] With regard to this chapter's analysis of *Riot* as a detective novel see especially Tony Hilfer's *The Crime Novel. A Deviant Genre* (1990); George N. Dove's *The Reader and the Detective Story* (1997); Peter Nusser's *Der Kriminalroman* (2009); and John Scaggs' *The Cambridge Companion to Crime Fiction* (2005). Following Nusser, I consider crime fiction an umbrella term comprising the detective novel as a subcategory. Further relevant publications on the detective novel and crime fiction in general are A.E. Murch's *The Development of the Detective Novel* (1958); Charles J. Rzepka and Lee Horsley's *A Companion to Crime Fiction* (eds. 2010); and Vincenzo Ruggiero's *Crime in Literature* (2003).

[149] Randy Diggs whose name echoes his status as investigative, "digging" journalist is only one among *Riot*'s many telling names, most of which point to the qualities and functions of the different characters within the story. Other examples include that of the local Hindu-nationalist leader Ram Charan Gupta, whose name not only echoes the Hindu god Ram and refers to his support of the Ram Janmabhoomi temple campaign but also points to his dubious nature since Gupta means 'secret' or 'hidden' in Sanskrit. Furthermore, the name of Gupta's henchman Makhan Singh, who most probably murdered Priscilla on Gupta's orders, implies his 'evil' nature, just as the name of Kadambari, who betrays the Priscilla and Lakshman's affair and their meeting point to Gupta, signals that she is a telltale 'female cuckoo.' Lakshman's name, which refers back to the Hindu god Ram's brother, partial incarnation of Vishnu who is usually considered as the great preserver, points to his efforts at preserving the communal peace in his district. Other instances of telling names include those of Lakshman's wife Geetha whose Sanskrit name echoes her great desire for harmony, the Superintendant of the Police whose name Gurinder is appropriate in that it means 'leader' or 'chief,' and the congenial Muslim professor's name Sarwar which aptly invokes his congenial and 'pleased' nature. The novel's extensive use of telling names strongly indicates the characters' status as stock characters, which is typical of detective novels.

[150] Dove identifies four features as characteristic of detective stories: "First, the main character is a detective; this person may be male or female, professional or amateur, public or private, single or multiple, but there is an identifiable detection role. Second, the main plot of the story is the account of the investigation and resolution; there may be love themes, ghost themes, social themes, or others, but the detection retains precedence. Third, the mystery is no ordinary problem but a complex secret that appears impossible of solution. Finally, the mystery is solved; the solution may be unknown to the detective-protagonist, the official police, or anybody else in the story, but it must be known to the reader" (10).

The 'Priscilla story line,' including the love affair between Priscilla and Lakshman, even though it turns out to be secondary, is not an irrelevant embellishment. It has three essential functions. Firstly, it lures the novel's readers into getting involved in the 'riot story line,' directing their foci of attention towards *Riot*'s central topic, i.e. what Tharoor calls the "Hindu/Muslim collision" (Tharoor and Myers 2). Secondly, by making its readers conceive of the Priscilla murder as an intellectual riddle, it diminishes their emotional involvement and makes them foreground their analytical and critical capabilities instead.[151] The employment of these latter capabilities is essential for the readers' critical engagement with the different arguments concerning the history of communal violence in the 'riot story line.'[152] Thirdly, due to its firm establishment of the Hindu-nationalist Ram Charan Gupta as a main suspect for Priscilla's murder, the 'detective story line' implies that Gupta is a dubious as well as morally depraved character and thereby considerably weakens Gupta's, and thus the Hindu-nationalists', position concerning the "Hindu/Muslim collision."

The novel's 'riot story line,' which proves to be the dominant one, makes *Riot* an example of what Linda Hutcheon calls "historiographic metafictions" which "are both intensely self-reflexive and yet lay claim to historical events and personages.[153] According to Hutcheon, this type of historical fiction makes "its theoretical self-awareness of history and fiction as human constructs [...] the grounds for its rethinking and reworking of the forms and contents of the past" (ibid. 5). The novel can be said to metafictionally imitate and subvert the genre of the documentary novel.[154] It abounds with references to verifiable facts to such a high degree that

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[151] On the centrality of the readers' intellectual involvement in detective novels see especially Dove (1997) and Scaggs (2005).

[152] Only a reader who is well informed on the topic of communal violence in India is able to distinguish between referential facts and fictional facts. All other readers are invited to become 'detectives' in a way themselves if they are interested in gaining certainty regarding the different degrees of factual accuracy and fictionalization of the narrative's constituents. They have to establish themselves which events, personages, dates and places are verifiable outside the novel. Also, they have to verify the accuracy of the represented perspectives, contextualizations and interpretations, and decide upon their legitimacy.

[153] Hutcheon 1988: 2. In his article "Shashi Tharoor's *Riot*: Perspectives on History, Politics and Culture" (2009), Paras Dhir comes to a similar conclusion regarding *Riot*'s genre: "[T]aking history as its base, Tharoor revists the past with objectivity and irony, and transforms it into historiographical meta-fiction which problematizes history by presenting historical incidents and characters. [...] The fictional account of the riot, the actual incidents [...] relating to the conflicts of the Ram Janam Bhoomi/Babri Masjid indicate the understanding the treats history as fiction" (34).

[154] On the genre of the documentary novel, and its close relatives the non-fiction novel and the journalistic novel, see especially Leonora Flis' *Factual Fictions. Narrative Truth and the Contemporary American Documentary Novel* (2010); Barbara Foley's *Telling the Truth* (1986); Phyllis Frus' *The Politics and*

the reading of some passages is reminiscent of historical accounts, introductory school book texts or political documentaries on the present-day situation in India. Eager to name his sources in his "Acknowledgements," Tharoor points out that his story of the fictional riot story is actually based on a then still "unpublished account of a riot in Khargone, Madhya Pradesh" which occurred as a result of the Ram Sila Puja-processions in 1989.[155]

At the same time, however, the documents contain contradictory, even opposing views and all of the novel's characters and the documents that constitute the narrative are fictive. Thus, *Riot* extensively refers to the history and the historiography of communal violence in India and at the same time problematizes both as constructed and in need of reconsideration. In line with Ansgar Nünning, who remarks that the term "fiktionale Metahistoriographie" would be more precise in terms of the genre's focus on the discussion of issues related to the acquisition of historical knowledge, the reconstruction of historical events and their representation (1996: 383-84), I will use the term 'metahistoriographic novel' for describing *Riot*.

The issues of "the unknowability of history" and "the unknowability of the truth," which Tharoor identifies as central themes of his novel (Tharoor and Myers 3), are essentially concerned with the fragile as well as constantly changing nature of the boundary between fact and fiction, truth and lie, as the historian Hayden White among others has pointed out.[156] These issues are linked to several, closely related factors. Firstly, there exist different truth concepts, some of which rely on reason and factual proof while others are based on belief and assign myths and legends the utmost relevance. Secondly, it is impossible to retrieve and assemble each and every existing piece of information and aspect concerning past events. Thirdly, it is unfeasible to ascertain without doubt the reliability or 'truth value' of each available reference to past events. Fourthly, the different established details and aspects of past events are often assigned variable degrees of relevance, mainly due to different truth concepts or

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*Poetics of Journalistic Narrative* (1994); and Lars Ole Sauerberg's *Fact into Fiction. Documentary Realism in the Contemporary Novel* (1991).

[155] Tharoor also names the account's author Harsh Mander and points out that he had been the town's "the District Magistrate, whose job it was to administer the district, and therefore handle the riot" (Tharoor and Myers 2). Thanks to the fact that Mander had been "a college classmate" of his, the man had agreed to send Tharoor "a first-person account of his experience" (ibid.). Shortly afterwards, Mander's account was published under the title *Unheard Voices: Stories of Forgotten People* (Penguin India, 2001). Tharoor points out, however, that not only all details relating to the novel's characters are entirely fictional but also the Priscilla murder as no foreigner was killed in the historical Khargone riot.

[156] See Hayden White's "The Fictions of Factual Representation" (1976), *Tropics of Discourse. Essay in Cultural Criticism* (1978), "The Historical Text as Artifact" (1978) and *The Content of Form. Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (1987).

ideological views. Hence, it is impossible to draw a picture of the past which is absolutely complete or universally accepted as true. As a consequence, the truth of past events, and hence historical truth, only exists in the plural and each version's outlook depends on where the boundaries between fact and fiction and that between relevant and irrelevant details are drawn.

*Riot* illustrates these issues by virtue of, firstly, its blend of generic features and secondly, its perspectival structure. By linking the retelling of the riot's history and the history of communal violence in general to a detective story about an eventually unsolved murder case, *Riot* underlines the fact that the research for the truth about the past is a laborious as well as often futile endeavour. Secondly, by virtue of its perspectival structure the novel stresses the fact that the past is usually only accessible through a plurality of versions whose reliability can hardly ever be ascertained without doubt. Apart from illustrating that historical truth only exists in the form of different versions, *Riot*'s perspectival structure has a further important function. By virtue of including several diverging perspectives of characters from different ideological camps, the novel can be said to stage a democratic debate wherein the representatives of different factions are given the opportunity to voice and argue for their positions.

## IV.2.ii *Riot*'s Perspectival Structure — A Plethora of Voices

One of the most peculiar aspects of *Riot*'s is its perspectival structure which features a multitude of different perspectives and yet lacks a single unifying and contextualising narrative voice. Formally and stylistically *Riot* is less a novel than a "file folder" containing seemingly unordered pieces of evidence which an investigative journalist or a historian could have melded into a coherent narrative — the detailed and 'true' (hi-)story of Priscilla Hart's murder and the riot in Zalilgarh.

*Riot*'s first five and concluding two pages imitate the layout of a daily newspaper and feature four articles from the fictive newspaper *The New York Journal*. These articles introduce and conclude the actual narrative, which is an intricate collage of seemingly randomly ordered but meticulously dated official interview statements and field reports, private messages and notes and similar kinds of writing. The first document is, as mentioned earlier, the reproduction of a newspaper article, one of four in all. It is headlined "American Slain in India," dated "Monday, October 2, 1989" and issued by the press agency AP. This first article is no more than a slightly extended wire copy informing its readers that "Priscilla Hart, 24, of Manhattan, a volunteer with the nongovernmental organization HELP-US, was beaten and stabbed to death in Zalilgarh town in the state of Uttar Pradesh" (R 1). As for the reasons of Priscilla Hart's death,

the article provides its readers with the rather unsatisfactory explanation, quoting an "embassy spokesman," that she "may simply have been in the wrong place at the wrong time" (ibid.).

The following two articles, "Death of An Idealist" (dated "Tuesday, October 3, 1989," R 2-3) and "Parents Plan to Visit India to View Site of Daughter's Death" (dated "Wednesday, October 4, 1989," R 4) elaborate both on Priscilla Hart's death. Their author Victor Goodman,[157] presumably a New York based staff member of *The New York Journal*, makes the first step towards converting the mere news item into a proper story: he elaborates on those aspects that provide his readers with familiarity and emotional appeal. Furthermore, Goodman, true to his name, capitalizes on Priscilla's death by representing it as a tale of human tragedy, referring to it as "a heartbreakingly tragic event" of an "idealistic 24-year-old volunteer and scholar" (R 2). He emphatically stresses the affective dimensions by portraying Priscilla via several quotations as an utterly innocent and intelligent, lovely and beloved, socially committed and philanthropic young woman — "a gem, an angel, a person brought onto this earth to do good" whom "nobody would have had a reason to kill" (ibid.).

The fourth article, "An American Death in India," differs from the preceding ones in many respects: It is written by yet another journalist, named Randy Diggs, obviously the *New York Journal*'s foreign correspondent to New Delhi who actually reports from Zalilgarh. Apart from providing still more details about the late Priscilla, her life and work in Zalilgarh, Randy Diggs' article depicts the local scenery of rural India and provides some background information about the historical and socio-political context of the incident. The article thus prompts its readers to shift their focus of attention, redirecting their gaze away from New York, away from the US, onto the late Priscilla's place of residence, Zalilgarh. Furthermore, he firmly locates Priscilla's death in the Indian context and thereby forces his readers to take into consideration the relevance of additional background information. Functioning as a frame for the documents that follow, Diggs' reportage is interrupted in mid sentence in its fourth paragraph (R 5) and only continues at the very end of the novel (R 266).

Mr Diggs' article quite literally constitutes the envelope that encloses the raw material of "An American Death in India" — the many bits and pieces relating to 'the truth' about what happened or potentially happened to Priscilla Hart and also about what happened or

[157] Another telling name, obviously.

potentially happened in the riot afflicted village Zalilgarh.[158] These text units unfold several, sometimes contradictory versions of the events and, since they are recounted by those who were entangled in them, they are clearly infused with their authors' respective views, arguments and motives resulting from differing affiliations to different religious and political groups. Obviously, the novel's problematization of the "unknowability of history" and "unknowability of truth," already indicated by *Riot*'s generic features, is further sustained through its perspectival structure.

*Riot* features what Goran Nieragden calls "multifocalization" (692) on the one hand and the omission of contextualizing comments regarding the different perspectives by the unidentified extra-diegetic narrator on the other hand. The term "multifocalization" describes *Riot*'s inclusion of the "alternation between several focalizers" (692) by virtue of its many 'documents' which differ both with respect to their authors and the characters they refer to. The focalizers are those narrated characters or entities from whose perspectives the novel's events are perceived. In line with Mieke Bal's claim that "[*f*]*ocalization* [...] 'colours' the story with subjectivity" (2009 [1985]: 8), I argue that the plurality of evaluations and opinions in *Riot* is established by virtue of oscillating focalization. The novel features a great number of clearly identified focalizers on the diegetic level. The high number results from the fact that most of the characters somehow involved in the novel's plot also have the status of focalizers. Nearly all characters are either interview partners or authors of letters, diary entries and other narrative units wherein they present their views concerning past events. By virtue of their double-status, these figures will also be termed character-focalizers from now on.[159]

The group of character-focalizers include the journalist Randy Diggs, the late Priscilla Hart, Priscilla's parents Katherine and Rudyard, Priscilla's lover District Magistrate V. Lakshman, Lakshman's friend and colleague Superintendent of Police Gurinder Singh, Lakshman's wife Geetha, Priscilla's colleague Kadambari, Priscilla's former boss at HELP-US Mr. Shankar Das,

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[158] The fact that the story and its constitutive documents are framed by newspaper articles further indicates that the novel imitates journalistic writing and the documentary novel and problematizes their usually unproblematic concept of factual, verifiable truth. This also indicated by fact that the novel's 'documents' presenting and narrating historical facts are themselves fictitious constitutes conscious play with and a blurring of the boundary between fact and fiction, truth and lie.

[159] It would also be possible to use the term 'narrator-focalizer' with regard to these characters as most of them are narrators of stories on the diegetic level. This would only result in further complicating the representation of the novel's complex perspectival structure. I therefore prefer to confine the narrator to the extra-diegetic level from where it tells the novel's story. The narrator then turns several of the novel's characters into focalizers who present their individual perspectives in the documents they write.

the Muslim history professor Mohammed Sarwar, and the Hindu-nationalist Gupta. Most character-focalizers and their thoughts as well as actions also figure in the accounts of other character-focalizers. As the novel lacks a superordinate contextualizing and evaluating perspective, all focalizers and their perspectives could be expected to have the same degree of trustworthiness. This is not the case, however, as the novel exposes some of its character-focalizers, especially the Hindu-nationalist Gupta, as untrustworthy and outright repugnant. Instead of employing the unifying voice of its narrator to comment on and evaluate the different perspectives, the novel takes advantage of the relativising and evaluative possibilities inherent in multifocalization.

*Riot* makes extensive use of what Nieragden calls "repetitive multifocalization" where "identical objects are focalized by different focalizers."[160] This type can be further subdivided into the two categories of "autotelic versus alterotelic focalization" (692): "When different focalizers represent identical objects, they can concentrate on the same (autotelic) aspects/features of it or on different ones (alterotelic)" (692). According to Nieragden, the difference between the two subtypes "helps to establish the degree of a text's perspectival consistency/integrity" (692-93). Referring back to Nünning, Nieragden claims that "alterotelic focalizations" are especially suitable to "individualize both the characters and the objects in question" by virtue of the "discrepancies and contrastive accents among characters' perceptions of seemingly identical objects" (693). I find that both types of repetitive multifocalization are an eminent feature of *Riot*. This applies to an even greater degree to the alterotelic type as there are many instances where different characters concentrate on completely different aspects when referring to the same person, event or context. As a result *Riot* succeeds not only in exposing "discrepancies and contrastive accents among characters' perceptions of seemingly identical objects" (Nieragden 693) but also in enabling the comparative evaluation of different characters' positions.

One important example is that of different characters telling the details of the Ram Janmabhoomi temple/Babri Masjid debate. While the Muslim history professor Sarwar focuses on the historical facts and dismisses the Hindu-nationalists' claim that a Hindu temple ever existed on that very spot, the Hindu-nationalist Gupta concentrates on Hindu myths and legends which he thinks proof the truth of his claim. Again, both draw different conclusions

[160] Nieragden 692. Nieragden also names the category of "singulative multifocalization" where "each focalizer perceives different objects" (692). This type is not present in *Riot*, however.

from their focussing on different aspects: The professor acknowledges the necessity of respecting the Hindu-nationalists' beliefs but contends that they should still not destruct the medieval mosque out of respect for the ancient building's architectural beauty and for the sake of communal peace. Conversely, Gupta does not accept the legitimacy of any deviant view and requests the ancient mosque's destruction irrespective of the building's beauty and the fact that this act could result in an escalation of Hindu-Muslim tensions into large-scale violence. As a result of this instance of alterotelic repetitive multifocalization, *Riot* shows Sarwar's liberal, tolerant and peace seeking mindset while it exposes Gupta as a narrow-minded, distrustful and hate-mongering politician.

As was already pointed out, the question of the identity of the narrator on the extra-diegetic level remains unanswered in stark contrast to the multitude of identified focalizers. The investigating journalist Diggs is the most probable candidate as he is the author of the framing article, conducts all the interviews and personally meets most of the novel's characters. It could have been Diggs, who while editing all his collected material for his article meticulously identified all his items before turning them into a story. Most of the text units are what I would like to call 'identified' documents,' since they all provide information about their actual authors and addressees, refer to the context of their origin and give a quite exact idea of the manner and purposes of their composition.

However, there are several text units, mostly recordings or notes of statements and dialogues, which leave the question of their origins and authors unanswered. While they also provide details such as the composition date, the people involved in the recorded dialogue and also often the place where the dialogue occurred, they lack any information concerning who witnessed the dialogue, who decided to document it and why. These items will be termed 'unidentified text units' or 'accounts.' Neither of these 'unidentified accounts' can be attributed to Diggs or any other character-focalizer doubtlessly. A possible solution to this riddle is that Diggs is indeed the narrator who, in order to turn his assembled documents into a coherent narrative, made up several encounters and dialogues to establish lacking connexions, turned them into 'documents' resembling the others and then added them to the collection.

In sum, I argue that *Riot*'s perspectival structure illustrates the different perspectives of public debate over the Ram Janmabhoomi temple and makes its readers sympathize with the moderate, conciliatory perspectives of Lakshman and Sarwar by virtue of the evaluative and comparative possibilities inherent in repetitive multifocalization. This bias is further sustained

by virtue of the implications of the 'Priscilla story line' which results in projecting the Hindu-nationalist Gupta as one of the main suspects for murdering the US-American woman. By casting Gupta as depraved and vicious character, the novel negates his capacity of moderate and morally sound judgement and thereby considerably weakens his position with regard to the Ram Janmabhoomi-debate in particular and the nature of the relation between Hindus and Muslims in general.

### IV.2.iii The 'Priscilla Story Line' — Detecting the Murderer

The established 'facts,' which form the backbones of both the 'Priscilla story'- and the 'riot story'-lines, are provided at the beginning of the book in a series of four newspaper articles taken from the fictitious US-American *The New York Journal*. These facts are few, and they are simple enough: During a riot in Zalilgarh, a fictitious small rural town located in the northern Indian state of Uttar Pradesh, a young US-American woman is killed — or "slain," as the first of the articles terms it (R 1). The larger context of the fictitious riot referred to in the novel's title is the historical Ram Janmabhoomi temple campaign initiated by Hindu-nationalists which began to take hold of India in the early 1980s. In *Riot*, the village Zalilgarh becomes the site of one of the many religious brick collection processions, which were organised in the frame of said campaign, and a riot breaks out. In the night before the procession takes place, two Hindu boys, who want to mount a banner for the next day's parade, are stabbed by Muslim boys. On the actual day of the procession through the town, the violence escalates: Participants of the parade turn into a violence prone mob after the throwing of a bomb by Muslims. In the course of the ensuing "full-scale riot," states US-American journalist Mr Diggs in his *The New York Journal* article, "eight people were killed [...], forty-seven injured, and hundreds of thousands of property damaged" (R 5). As Mr Diggs laconically states in the same article, this is a rather "modest affair" when compared to "the standards of some of the riots that have been sweeping northern India in the wake of the Ram Janmabhoomi agitation" (ibid.). What renders this rather "modest" riot exceptional and makes it attract the attention of *The New York Journal*, is that one of the eight people who got killed is a US-American citizen — Priscilla Hart.

Commissioned by *The New York Journal*, Randy Diggs sets out 'dig' for and assemble the hidden and dispersed pieces relating to Priscilla's murder in order to combine them to a good story that attracts many readers.

> For Diggs NY Journal New Delhi From Wasserman Foreign Desk. Have Been using Mainly Agency Copy on Hart Killing. Grateful you Look into the Story in Greater Detail for longer

> Feature Piece. Who the Girl was, what she was doing, how she was killed, why. ("cable to Randy Diggs. October 9, 1989," R 9)

From the start, the journalist Diggs is cast as the chief investigator of Priscilla's murder. Accompanied by Priscilla's parents, Katharine and Rudyard Hart, he travels to Zalilgarh where she had been a social worker at the local NGO-station called "HELP-US". Like Diggs, Priscilla's parents are eager to find out the truth about what happened and why it happened. In contrast to Priscilla's parents, however, for whom the journey to Zalilgarh is an emotionally charged endeavour, Diggs' embarks on a business trip where he plans to conduct investigations for solving an intellectual riddle in order to write his article. By virtue of his role as emotionally uninvolved detective in the 'Priscilla story line,' Diggs can be said to fulfil the function of a guide to the novel's readers. His comments are closest to what can be considered overarching contextualizing information to the reader.

As the interviews unfold, the novel's different 'identified documents' and 'unidentified accounts' disclose more and more insights into the context and the thoughts and actions of Priscilla, Lakshman, Gupta and other characters. These insights enable the reader to realize two things: Firstly, it becomes clear that Priscilla, although an innocent victim, was at least partially responsible for her own death due to several aspects of her behaviour and deeds — a type of victim for which the crime novel writer F. Tennyson Jesse has created the term "murderee."[161] Secondly, the reader is provided with three potential murderers or group of suspects: Firstly, a group of unidentified Muslim criminals involved in the riot, secondly, the Muslim Ali, and, thirdly, Gupta's henchman Makhan Singh.

## *Priscilla as "Murderee"*

The first group of suspects, which are also vaguely referred to in Diggs' final article, are the Muslim criminals. These are put forward as potential murderers by Gurinder Singh who assumes that the group had retreated to the Kotli[162] around the time of the riot and that Priscilla, who went there for her secret meeting with her lover Lakshman, surprised them.

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[161] Hilfer 6. The figure of the "murderee" is characterised by its own partial responsibility for its unnatural death and hence "all but incites his/her own murder" (Hilfer 74). This may range from "mere carelessness (not locking the door, etc.)" and even instances where "the victim shares the crime with the perpetrator and the novel probes the psychology of the self-appointed victim" (Brigid Brophy cited in Hilfer 6).

[162] The term "Kotli" refers to a partly decayed, supposedly haunted house outside the village of Zalilgarh. In this Kotli, Lakshman and Priscilla had secretly been seeing each other twice a week since the beginning of their love affair.

Diggs' concluding statement that she simply was "in the wrong place at the wrong time" is only partly correct, however, as Priscilla should have known that it is highly perilous to wander about a riot-afflicted town at night all on her own. In a similar way, she can be said to have trifled with other people's feelings in precarious situations and thereby provoked not only her Help-US work colleague Kadambari's anger but also the hatred of the second suspect Ali. Convinced that she knows better what needs to be done, Priscilla dismisses Kadambari's premonitions and advice and treats her with contempt.

> Kadambari didn't like it one bit. The women's got no real commitment to the cause; for her it's just a job. She looked at me, [...] and I knew she thought I was a foreign busybody interfering in something that was none of my business, making things more difficult for her. But I was having none of it. "You're an extension worker," I reminded her. "It's time to extend yourself and your work." I don't think she'll ever forgive me for that. (R 212)

Priscilla counsels Ali's desperate wife Fatima to abort their ninth child for the sake of her well-being. As a result, Ali swears to take severe revenge on Priscilla, who according to his view has meddled in family affairs in an insolent manner. In one of her letters to her friend Cindy, Priscilla recounts how Ali

> came down to the Center looking for Kadambari and me. [...] He was murderously angry [...] and when he advanced toward me screaming "I told you to leave her alone!" a couple of men in the office had to physically restrain him. "I'll kill the foreign whore!" he shouted as he was dragged out, flailing his fists in my direction. (R 233)

With regard to both suspects, then, Priscilla can be said to have been responsible for her death at least to a certain degree as she clumsily trifled with precarious situations. In all of her writings, especially in the five excerpts "from Priscilla Hart's scrapbook"[163] and in the nine letters and excerpts from the letters she writes to her best friend Cindy Valeriani,[164] Priscilla is shown to be naive, ignorant and prejudiced. Convinced that she as an US-American citizen knows best how to solve India's problems, she tries to implement her solutions regardless of their inappropriateness as regards the complex social-cultural and political situation.

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[163] "December 25, 1988" (R 15-16), "February 14, 1989" (R 23-26), "February 14, 1989" (R 46-50), "July 16, 1989" (R 63) and "June 22, 1989" (R 138-41). The last scrapbook entry includes a poem by Lakshman entitled "Minto Park, Calcutta, 1969-71" (R 138-41).

[164] Letters "from Priscilla Hart to Cindy Valeriani": "February 2, 1989" (R 18-22), "February 16, 1989" (R 68-69), "April 5, 1989" (R 89-95, Lakhman's poems: 90-92 and 95), "July 25, 1989" (R 159-61), "August 5, 1989" (R 170-1); "August 15, 1989" (R 199-200), "August 22, 1989" (R 211-13), "September 3, 1989" (R 233-35); "September 19, 1989" (R 241-43). The third letter again includes two poems by Lakshman entitled "Advice to the World's Politicians" (R 90-92) and "I Am an Indian." (R 95) Obviously, Lakshman's three poems contain the voice of their author, not that of Priscilla.

Priscilla's status as a "murderee" is further sustained by the fact that Lakshman, during their secret meetings, lectures Priscilla extensively concerning the history of communal strife and violence. In a letter to her friend Cindy she admits that Lakshman "had to educate me from scratch about the whole Hindu-Muslim question. Not just the basics [...] but on the more recent troubles" (R 21). Lakshman's educating Priscilla (and, implicitly, of the uninformed section of *Riot*'s readership) forms a quintessential part both of the story level of *Riot*, constituting an important element of Priscilla's and Lakshman's relationship, and of the novel's discourse level. It is one of the most obvious signs of the fact that the narrative is essentially concerned with the phenomenon of communal riots, their conditions, reasons, dynamics and participants.[165] Priscilla, however, instead of using the newly acquired background knowledge for moving more carefully and cognisant in her immediate socio-cultural context, proves to be either not able or not willing to realize its relevance for her own situation. Instead, she decides to sideline history, traditions and customs as unimportant and insists on 'having it her own way.'

## *The 'Unidentified' Text Units – Disclosing Priscilla's Murderer*

The most probable solution to the riddle of who killed Priscilla, namely Makhan Singh on orders of Gupta, is primarily provided by the 'unidentified text units.' These contain condemning information incriminating Makhan Singh as henchman of Ram Charan Gupta. Gupta, the superior Hindu authority and confidant of the devoutly religious Hindu people of Zalilgarh is told about the love affair between Lakshman and Priscilla by Lakshman's wife Geetha and Priscilla's colleague Kadambari who is disgruntled with Priscilla's self-righteous and arrogant attitude at work. First, Geetha is recorded to visit him after having got to know of her husband's affair with Priscilla and ask him for help: "I don't care how you do it. Use tantra, do the tandava, use anyone and anything you want, Swamiji, but please don't let this foreign devil-woman run away with my husband."[166] Later, Priscilla's work colleague Kadambari also tells Gupta about Priscilla and Lakshman's affair and provides him with the information about when and where the couple meets.[167] She does this obviously out of personal grudge against

[165] In all these lecturing passages, Priscilla functions as Lakshman's mouthpiece, uncritically reproducing his views of things which are presented to the reader as irrefutable facts. As the ignorant Western outsider educated from scratch, Priscilla can be considered the primary identification figure for those readers of *Riot* who are equally uninformed concerning the historical, geographical, political, social, religious and other background information on India.

[166] In "Geehta Lakshman at the Shiva Mandir. September 2, 1989," R 227.

[167] "Ram Charan Gupta to Kadambari. September 25, 1989," R 275.

Priscilla as she complains bitterly about Priscilla's behaviour at a meeting with their boss.[168] Kadambari's complaint strongly suggests that she would like to have Priscilla taught a lesson or even get rid of her.

Gupta also has his own reasons for seeking revenge on Lakshman whom he counts among "these Muslim-lovers" he detests (259). Lakshman's supposedly biased Muslim-friendly behaviour before the riot and in general is a thorn in Gupta's flesh. He is recorded to pass on Kadambari's information to his disciple Makhan Singh, who equally yearns for revenge on the 'Muslim-lover' Lakshman, and commissions him to "to teach [Lakshman] a lesson, [...] And his woman too" (259):

> The bastard. This is the way that Lakshman treats us, after what the Muslims did to us last night? ... But don't worry, Makhan. We will have our revenge. On the Muslims, and on the bastard who gives them such free rein. Yes, we will revenge ourselves on Lakshman too.[169]

Gupta's involvement in Priscilla's murder becomes even more tangible in a further dialogue with Makhan Singh which takes place after the riot and Priscilla's murder. Gupta warns Makhan not to tell him anything about what he did.[170] Gupta, however, outlines what most probably happened and thereby suggests that it was either Makhan or the Muslim criminals who killed Priscilla.

> I don't want to know. Don't tell me anything, Makhan. Perhaps you went there [...] looking for the DM to teach him a lesson. [...] Instead, perhaps you found his woman [...]. Perhaps she started running away from you, and you caught her, and perhaps she fought too hard and you used your knife. Perhaps you thought of Arup [Makhan's son], scarred and disfigured for life because this woman's special friend won't let us deal with these Muslims once and for all. It doesn't matter. I don't want to know. [...] Or perhaps you went there and found the Muslim criminals already there, and you found discretion the better part of valor and turned back. So many possibilities. . . (262)

Gupta's status as main suspect is further sustained by the fact that Lakshman's wife thanks Gupta for his help when she visits the Hindu temple.[171] Although none of the other suspects can be ruled out beyond doubt, the solution that Gupta commissioned Makhan Singh to hurt if not to murder Priscilla in order to teach Lakshman a lesson is the most probable one. Also, it is an important factor that Gupta's guilt is predominantly implied through unidentified accounts. They reveal Gupta's malicious designs without being attributable to any identifiable

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[168] "Kadambari to Shankar Das. September 20, 1989," R 244.

[169] "Ram Charan Gupta to Makkan Singh. September 30, 1989," R 259.

[170] "Ram Charan Gupta to Makkan Singh. October 3, 1989," R 262.

[171] "Geetha at the Shiva Mandir. October 7, 1989," R 264.

voice and consequently have the status of secret insider information which discloses Gupta's 'real' face. The fact that *Riot* does not identify these accounts with a specific character and viewpoint strongly suggests that these text units were supplemented by the novel's unidentified narrator in order to cast the Hindu-nationalist Gupta as the narrative's prototypical 'bad guy' and completely subvert his moral integrity. This is of high relevance as it considerably weakens the credibility of Gupta's position regarding the history of communal violence.

What also becomes clear from the discussion of Priscilla's potential murderers is that her violent death was anything but a 'wrong time wrong place-coincidence.' Most probably, she was not killed by accident but out of personal grudge against her person either because of her affair with Lakshman or her unauthorized meddling with sensitive family business. The reasons for Priscilla's murder are thus shown to be deeply entangled with the history and the lives of the people of Zalilgarh and Priscilla's clumsy interference with them.

In the course of all of the interviews Diggs conducts to find out the truth about Priscilla's death the interview partners feel that they need to provide the US-American journalist with the larger picture. They feel compelled to do this even though Diggs continuously reminds them that these are, at least to him and his readers, nothing but contextual or even irrelevant background information on the real story of Priscilla's murder. This is also the case when Lakshman feels obliged to apologize for his digressions: "I beg your pardon? Of course. I'm sorry I got carried away. You're not really doing a story on how we managed the riot. You're doing a story about Priscilla. I'm sorry" (R 167). In all interviews it becomes clear that Diggs only wants to know those details of the Zalilgarh riot and the history of communal violence which are linked to Priscilla's murder and its detection. Lakshman for example assures Diggs that he is "not trying to avoid talking about Priscilla Hart," but wants "to complete the picture of this riot" for him so he is able to "understand what we were dealing with during those days" (R 165).

Gurinder Singh's account of the riot stresses the same point, namely that Priscilla's whereabouts and condition were none of his or Lakshman's business at a time when they had to struggle for averting a riot and later for restoring and maintaining peace in an acutely riot prone community:

> These bloody riots — ours, and the others across northern India. They're like a raging flood. When the stormy waters recede, all you will see left behind are corpses and ruins. [...] Priscilla Hart. I knew you wanted to talk about Priscilla. I'm just trying to get you to

> understand why we don't know much about what happened to her. We had enough on our minds at the time. (R 179)

While these statements bear witness to the primary interest of Diggs and the supposed priorities of his article's projected readership, they also serve to remind Diggs (and the readers of the novel) of the fact that Priscilla's death was just one among many others and that her death only gets so much attention because she happened to be a US American citizen. Obviously, the interviewer and the interviewees have divergent ideas of what exactly constitutes the complete picture and which details need to be included in order to tell the 'whole' story. Many similar statements made by Lakshman, Gurinder Singh and other characters imply that they consider her fate no more or less tragic than any one of the others' and that the real 'tragedy' is that "these bloody riots" are a common element of present-day life in India. Consequently, the interviewees' accounts strongly suggest that *Riot* is primarily a discussion of the history, the dynamics and the participants of communal violence in present day India.

## *Vital Functions of the 'Detective Story Line'*

Even though the question of who killed Priscilla are hardly relevant to the questions concerning the origins of and reasons for the 'real tragedy' of the communal violence in India, the 'Priscilla story line' nevertheless fulfils vital functions for *Riot*'s discussion of its central topic. Firstly, it helps the reader to identify the reliable voices in the novel by denigrating one voice in particular — that of Gupta. He is the character of which the reader learns she should definitely not sympathize with or trust. The disclosure of Gupta's moral depravity as murder suspect clearly renders his versions of what happened untrustworthy and stigmatizes his point of view as inappropriate and morally wrong.

Secondly, it is mostly thanks to Priscilla's death that readers become interested in the riot of Zalilgarh and the larger issue of religiously connoted violence in India today. The Priscilla story functions as a lure for the potential reader of the novel who might need to be tricked into thinking about utterly unromantic, serious matters by a tragic love story.[172] Just as Priscilla learns about the complexity of the culture she moves in as a consequence of her infatuation with Lakshman, the novel's reader is lured into learning about the history of communal violence in India by her desire to solve the riddle of Priscilla's murder.

[172] This becomes especially obvious in face of the fact that the novel was originally published with the subtitle "A love story" in the US.

## IV.2.iv The 'Riot Story Line' — Discussing Communal Violence

In its 'riot story line,' *Riot* unfolds a complex scenario of rural communal violence between the Hindu and Muslim inhabitants of Zalilgarh. By admitting to the floor a great variety of character-focalizers from the different factions involved in the eponymous riot, the novel shows how the explosive mix of fixed affiliation of socio-cultural groups to creeds on the one hand and the local engagement of national lobbies in spreading inflammatory rumours and propaganda on the other hand leads to an escalation of violence. By way of recounting the story of the Zalilgarh riot, *Riot* sheds light on the larger picture: Zalilgarh with its mixed Hindu and Muslim population is the prototypical example of any northern Indian riot prone town.[173] The novel abounds with references to events of present-day India and its history of communal conflict and provides plenty of background information for the uninformed reader.

In its different 'identified documents,' *Riot* enable various characters from opposing political and ideological camps to voice their positions and thereby illuminates the ongoing political debate between the Hindu-nationalists and the Secularists in the public arena. This at least theoretically enables the novel's readers to view and judge a variety of 'facts' and their diverging interpretations from different perspectives. Furthermore, by equally including all these different viewpoints in its mulifocalizational perspectival structure, *Riot* imitates the conditions of a democratic debate where all representatives of the different positions concerning a controversial issue are given the opportunity to voice and argue for their opinion.

The 'identified documents' discussing the fictitious Zalilgarh riot and the history of communal violence can be grouped into three categories by virtue of their general approach to the topic and the consequent interpretation of the issues at hand. These categories are, firstly, the voices speaking from and exemplifying the 'secularist Position' and, secondly, the voices speaking from and exemplifying the 'Hindu-nationalist Position.' A special case is the character of the District Manager Lakshman who cannot be placed in any one of these categories or perspectival groups unambiguously. Having been educated in Britain and yet unabatedly cherishing Indian traditions and customs, Lakshman has an awkward intermediate position. He

[173] Apart from the fact that *Riot* is based on the historical riot in Khargone, Madhya Pradesh, there appear to be many similarities between the novel's fictitious town Zalilgarh and the real town Aligarh in the North Indian state of Uttar Pradesh as well. Aligarh has become more widely known as a consequence of the comprehensive research conducted by the political scientist Paul Brass on this town for his monograph *The Production of Hindu-Muslim Violence in Contemporary India*. According to Brass, "Aligarh ranks very high in the country in riot-proneness proportionately to its population and in the number of deaths over the 50 years from 1946 to 1995" (R 67).

consequently functions as a kind of intermediary between the Western outsider and the involved Indian citizen. His position is a precarious one, and his disrupted condition can be said to mirror the predicament of the novel, which aims at being two things at the same time, i.e. entertaining love story-crime fiction on the one hand and an awareness raising thesis novel on the other hand.

## *Lakshman, the Go-Between – Voicing the Westernized Hindu Secularist Position*

V. Lakshman, District Manager of Zalilgarh and Priscilla's lover and tutor, represents the Hindu secularist position concerning the Zalilgarh riot and the history of communalism in India. Lakshman's voice and viewpoint are present in the three instances of Lakshman talking to Priscilla in "Lakshman to Priscilla Hart,"[174] in the two "letter[s] from Lakshman to Priscilla"[175] and in the twelve excerpts "from Lakshman's journal."[176] His public voice as senior administration officer of Zalilgarh pervades the "transcript of Randy Diggs interview with District Magistrate V. Lakshman" conducted on "October 13, 1989" and inserted in the novel in three parts.[177] Lakshman's position regarding the history of communalism becomes most clearly articulated in the passages where he educates Priscilla about it. In a chapter that could be taken from Priscilla's scrapbook – the actual source is not mentioned – and which is entitled "Lakshman to Priscilla Hart" (R 42-45), Lakshman lectures widely and comprehensively on what he terms the "five major sources of division in India – language, region, caste, class, and religion" (R 42). When he gets to lecturing on the "fifth great source of division in India, religion," it becomes clear that he considers it as the most severe one. He blames it for "breed[ing] what we in this country call 'communalism' – the sense of religious chauvinism that transforms itself in bigotry, and sometimes violence, against the followers of other faiths" (R 43-4). He discusses at length the issue of Hindu-nationalist ideology, the politics of religious

[174] "February 27, 1989" (R 42-45), "July 1, 1989" (R 142-47) and "August 22, 1989" (R 214-21).

[175] "August 25, 1989" (R 223) and "September 18, 1989" (R 239-40).

[176] "March 26, 1989" (R 77-85), "May 3, 1989" (R 102-06), "July 16, 1989" (R 152-57), "June 2, 1989" (R 135-137), "August 3, 1989" (R 168-9), "August 10, 1989" (R 185-7), "August 14, 1989" (R 188-9), "August 19, 1989" (R 201-04), "August 22, 1989" (R 222), "August 26, 1989" (R 224-25), "October 3, 1989" (R 252) and "October 4, 1989" (R 265). The inclusion of his daughter's "birthday card for Lakshman. July 22, 1989" (R 158) presents the perspective of Lakshman as a cherished father who dotes on his daughter.

[177] "(Part 1)" (R 70-76), "(Part 2). October 13, 1989" (R 162-7) and "(Part 3). October 13, 1989" (R 236-38).

alterity, communalism and communal violence. Referring back to Gandhi he argues that "if Hinduism ever taught hatred of Islam or of non-Hindus, 'it is doomed to destruction'" (R 145).

From his detailed discussion of religion in general and Hinduism in particular it becomes clear that Lakshman does not consider religion per se the cause for communal strive and the violence it spawns. Lakshman insists that Hinduism is essentially characterised by "its diversity, [...] its openness, [...] religious freedom" and its "acceptance of all religions as true" (R 146). Instead, he blames communal strife and violence on the intolerance and single-mindedness of people like the Hindu-nationalists, who turn long past history into a weapon on the battle field of present day identity politics.

> The rage of the Hindu mobs being stoked by the bigots is the rage of those who feel themselves supplanted in this competition of identities, who think that they are taking their country back from usurpers of long ago. They want revenge against history, but they do not realize that history is its own revenge. (R 145)

According to his view, Hindu-nationalists do not only distort history and exploit it for their own ends but also fail to understand the true meaning of their faith and abuse it for their own political ends.

> It's just politics, [...]. The twentieth century politics of deprivation has eroded the culture's confidence. Hindu chauvinism has emerged from the competition for resources in a contentious democracy. Politicians of all faiths across India seek to mobilize voters by appealing to narrow identities. By seeking votes in the name of religion, caste, and region, they have urged voters to define themselves on these lines. Indians have been made more conscious than ever before of what divides us. (R 145)

In Lakshman's view, then, the politicians' utilization of religion and their politicization of religious affiliations for the purpose of gaining power and consolidating their power basis lie at the heart of the problem of communalism. Not religion as such. He even points out the futility of dismissing the validity of religious beliefs and denigrating them on the basis of historical facts when it comes to present-day political debates such as the one over the Babri Mosque and the Ram Janmabhoomi temple. According to Lakshman, religious fanatics cannot be persuaded to let go of their plans by being told that their religious beliefs have no historical basis. He argues that regardless if the Hindu-nationalists' claims are right or wrong, "what matters is what most people believe, for their beliefs offer a sounder basis for public policy than the historian's footnotes" (R 145). Lakshman's claim is that religious beliefs ought not to be sidelined but instead should be taken seriously and integrated into the debate in order to enable a real compromise and mutual understanding.

The only general solution Lakshman suggests to India's problems, including those related to religious alterity, is to struggle for the establishment of a community characterized by plurality and equal rights for all its members, regardless of their different religious affiliations, ethnicities, languages and all the other ways in which they are diversely different. For Lakshman, a person's religious affiliation should not and need not call into question his or her status as an Indian citizen. He speaks like a politician during an electoral campaign when he claims: "Let everyone feel they are as much Indian as everyone else: that's the secret. Ensure that democracy protects the multiple identities of Indians, so that people feel you can be a good Muslim and a good Bihari and a good Indian all at once" (R 45).

Although he admits that the implementation of this plan is far from easy, Lakshman proves to be a committed idealist who believes that the realisation of his "dream of an extraordinary, polyglot, polychrome, polyconfessional country" (R 45) is not only possible but actually well on its way. He is convinced that "democracy will solve the problems we're having with some disaffected Sikhs in Punjab; and democracy, more of it, is the only answer for the frustrations of India's Muslims too" (R 45). For Lakshman a democracy wherein all its citizens, regardless of their diverse differences, have equal rights is the only sensible long-term solution to India's problems.

It is important, however, that Lakshman fails completely to live up to his own ideals. He considers himself as true to Hindu traditions and values and capable of simultaneously enjoying Western culture and art. Although he studied in Britain and continuously cites Oscar Wilde, he is still abhorred by the fact that Priscilla has had many lovers before him and sings praises on the merits of arranged marriages. Hence, he neither fully belongs to Western culture nor to Indian culture, being a kind of go-between who tries to straddle both cultures and to mediate between them but who essentially fails in both endeavours. This shows most clearly in the fact that he enjoys sleeping with Priscilla but is not willing to leave his wife and break his traditions for her. Furthermore, Priscilla's relation to him most probably plays an important role in her murder. Lakshman consequently is a cheat from the point of view of both sides as he betrays the ideals of both by trying to play according to the rules of both and belong to both. His failure to accommodate and reconcile two different cultures within himself considerably weakens the credibility of his belief in the possibility of the harmonious coexistence of different religious communities in India.

In sum, then Lakshman is not a thoroughly sympathetic character either, even though not as repugnant as Gupta. Still, his inconsequent as well as deceitful behaviour concerning Priscilla and his wife tends to subvert his moral authority. In analogy to Gupta, this indicates a weakening of Lakshman's position regarding the problem of Hindu-Muslim violence and its solution. The facts that he is unable to keep peace in his small district on the one hand and that he cannot master diverging tendencies within himself without causing great unrest and even his lover's death indicate the improbability of his political agenda's implementation. Lakshman is not the only character who promotes the secularist position, however. The other most prominent voice is that of the Muslim history Professor Mohammed Sarwar.[178]

### *Mohammed Sarwar, the History Professor – Voicing the Muslim Secularist Position*

Similar to Lakshman, Sarwar's secularist position is characterized first and foremost by the following factors: the dismissal of religious alterity as influential aspect in politics, the wish for the harmonious co-existence of Hindus and Muslims in India, the condemnation of religious violence and the promotion of democratic plurality – regarding for example religious affiliations, ethnicities, truth version – as wholesome principle for the well-being of the community of the Indian citizens. In spite of his different origin and religious affiliation, Sarwar expresses similar ideals and visions for India's future which he request should be characterized by plurality.

The viewpoint and voice of Professor Mohammed Sarwar, the Muslim historian from Delhi, is represented in the excerpts "from transcript of Randy Diggs interview with Professor Mohammed Sarwar" conducted on "October 12, 1989" which are split up into two parts and inserted at different points of the text (R 107-16 and 180-4). Sarwar, who refers to himself as having two faiths, "Democracy [...] And Islam" (R 88), represents the Muslim 'secularist position' in *Riot*. Sarwar introduces himself to Randy Diggs as an associate professor at the

[178] As the views of Gurinder Singh, Zalilgarh's Superintendant of the Police, are basically the same as those of Lakshman, except regarding Lakshman's infatuation with Priscilla which Gurinder condemns, his view is not presented here in detail. Gurinder's voice dominates in the excerpts "from transcript of Randy Diggs interview with Superintendent of the Police Gurinder Singh" conducted on "October 14, 1989" split up into three parts which are included at different points in the text (R 126-34; 148-51 and 172-9) and in Gurinder's off-the-record words to Randy Diggs "over a drink. Saturday night, October 14, 1989" (R 190-8). The document "Gurinder to Ali, at Police Thana Zalilgarh" provides a further insight into the way he behaves and acts as a police officer "October 5, 1989." (R 261) Gurinder's perspective as a private individual is represented in the words he addresses to his colleague and friend Lakshman in private on two occasions. "Gurinder to Lakshman. Monday morning, August 21, 1989" (R 209-10); "Gurinder to Lakshman. October 15, 1989" (R 255-56).

department of History at Delhi University specializing in "Medieval Indian History [...] called by some the Muslim Period" (R 88). As the historian informs Lakshman during an earlier meeting, he is visiting Zalilgarh for doing research "on the life of a man called Syed Salar Masaud Ghazi, popularly known as Ghazi Miyan, a hugely revered Muslim warrior-saint in these parts [around Zalilgarh]" (R 64). For Sarwar, the reason why he decided to do research on Ghazi Miyan is his illustration of the fact

> that we have, especially in North India, an extraordinary tradition of heroes, whether warriors or saints or, in this instance, both, who are worshipped by both communities, Hindu and Muslim. (R 64)

Sarwar bemoans that "you hear a lot about the 'composite culture' of North India, but not enough about what I tend to call its composite religiosity" and points out that actually, "a number of Muslim religious figures in India are worshipped by Hindus" (R 64). As it turns out, Sarwar has devoted himself to a mission, claiming that "it's not enough to hail composite religiosity, to applaud complacently the syncretism of Hindu-Muslim relation in India" (R 64). While he admits that "we have to keep reminding people that tolerance is also a tradition in India, that communal crossovers are as common as communal clashes," he insists that "we mustn't abdicate the field of religious conflict to the chauvinists on both sides" (R 64). "What we need," Sarwar claims, "are 'nonsectarian histories of sectarian strife.' (R 64)

Sarwar indicts Hindu-nationalists such as Gupta for thinking of India's population primarily in terms of religious alterity and promoting and maintaining the boundaries between Hindus and Muslims. Sarwar regrets that "the national mind has been afflicted with the intellectual cancer of thinking of 'us' and 'them'" (R 114). He fears that this way of thinking "about Indianness" is highly dangerous and that "an India that denies itself to some of us could end up being denied to all of us" (R 114). For Sarwar, this would be like "a second Partition: and a partition in the Indian soul would be as bad as a partition in the Indian soil" (R 115-6). He concludes that the "only possible idea of India is that of a nation greater than the sum of its parts. An India neither Hindu nor Muslim, but both. That is the only India that will allow them [i.e. his sons] to continue to call themselves Indians" (R 116). While Sarwar's words are pervaded by sadness concerning what happened in the past and the present situation, they also speak of his firm belief in the possibility of a harmonious co-existence of Hindus and Muslims in the future. As becomes obvious in all the statements Sarwar makes throughout the novel, his idea of what India is and should be has a lot in common with that of Lakshman's vision of a

liberal democracy characterized by cultural pluralism and is completely different from that of Hindu-nationalists.

The conciliatory secularist discourse of Sarwar is counter-poised by the sectarian and religiously fanatic views of the Hindu-nationalist Gupta. This opposition applies both in terms of Gupta's tone of voice, which is acrimonious, relentless and full of threats, and his utterly different images of India's past and visions of India's future. Even if there is no direct confrontation of the two characters as they never meet personally in the novel, it is obvious that they constitute what I would term an oppositional pair in *Riot*. Each prototypically represents the Muslim Secularist and the Hindu-nationalist discourse on communalism respectively.

### *Ram Charan Gupta, the Politician – Voicing the Hindu-nationalist Position*

The 'Hindu-nationalist position' is characterized first and foremost by the following factors: the endorsement of religious alterity as influential aspect in all areas of politics, the struggle against the co-existence in India of Hindus and Muslims if both communities are granted equal rights, the sanctioning of religiously connoted violence and the promotion of uniformity – regarding for example religious affiliations, ethnicities, truth versions – as only acceptable principle for the well-being of the community of the Indian citizens. The 'Hindu-nationalist position' is represented solely through the voice of Gupta, who according to John Skinner is "identifiable generically, if not individually, as a member of the Hindu fundamentalist Bharatiya Janata or 'People's Party'" (25).

The voice and viewpoint of Gupta dominate in the three parts of Randy Diggs' interview with him.[179] Apart from being the respondent in the inter-views with Diggs, Gupta figures in several other conversations. It is he whom Lakshman's wife addresses when she asks for assistance concerning the affair between her husband and Priscilla at the Hindu temple and whom she later offers thanks for the fulfilment of her request. Further excerpts from conversations which show Gupta's mischievous nature are among others his conspiratorial dialogues with his henchman Makhan Singh.[180] As was pointed out earlier, it is relevant that all of the text units which indicate Gupta's involvement in Priscilla's murder

[179] "Ram Charan Gupta to Randy Diggs (*translated from Hindi*). October 12, 1989" (R 52-62; 120-24; 228-32.

[180] "Ram Charan Gupta to Makhan Singh. September 30, 1989" (R 259) and "Ram Charan Gupta to Makhan Singh. October 3, 1989" (R 262).

belong to the group of 'unidentified accounts.' It appears that the novel's narrator intended to cast Gupta as morally depraved, vicious character in order to further denigrate his position regarding religious alterity and communal violence.

It is equally telling that Gupta's voice and viewpoint are recorded in both Lakshman's and Gurinder's reports of the Zalilgarh riot when they talk about their meetings with the local Hindu-nationalists for the sake of defusing the explosive situation. Together with his party colleagues Gupta is reported to have refused all requests for cancelling their march and not taking retaliation on the whole Muslim community for the stabbing of the Hindu boys. As the sole representative of the Hindu-nationalist party who is admitted to the floor in *Riot*, Ram Charan Gupta is referred to deprecatorily each time he is mentioned in the reported statements and written documents of all the other characters. Randy Diggs refers to him as the "local Hindu chauvinist leader" (R 51) and Lakshman provides further details in his journal, which shed a rather unpleasant light on Gupta and his doings.

> There is a swami resident at the Shiva Mandir who has an unsavoury reputation for dabbling in tantric practices and other activities on the wrong side of the law. [...] there were rumors of human sacrifices that could never be proven, and the swami has henchmen — he calls them disciples — who look as though they would not think twice before devoutly slitting your throat on his orders. (R 102)

For the most part it is Gupta himself, however, who provides ample information on his religiously fanatic, sectarian thoughts, his malicious character and insidious actions, either in the three transcriptions of the interviews with Randy Diggs or other documents that record his words to others. He agitates acrimoniously against both "these evil Muslims" (R 124) and the "Muslim-loving" secularists whom he considers as traitors to the Hindu cause due to their striving for the peaceful co-existence of Hindus and Muslims in India. He casts all Muslims as belonging to one monolithic community, solely on the basis of their shared Muslim religion, which he categorizes as utterly un-Indian and foreign. Muslims, Gupta insists, are all "fanatics and terrorists; they only understand the language of force. And wherever these Muslims are, they fight with others. Violence against non-Muslims is in their blood" (R 57).

True to his role of the Hindu-nationalist hardliner, Gupta puts forward every conceivable anti-Muslim prejudice and slander voiced by his ilk for decades: He reproaches them for being "more loyal to a foreign religion, Islam, than to India." Instead of assimilating, he complains, they "stay together, work together, pray together," having developed a "ghetto mentality" (R 54-55). He blames them for "breaking our country with their treasonous partition" and voices the

Hindu majority's fear of the growing Muslim minority, asserting that they plan to "produce enough Muslims to outnumber us Hindus in our own country" (R 55-56). Gupta enthusiastically refers to the words of a Hindu preacher who said that "Muslims are like a lemon squirted into the cream of India" and "turn it sour" (R 57). In line with the preacher's request, who demands that "we have to remove that lemon, cut it up into little pieces, squeeze out the pips and throw it away," Gupta's greatest desire is to "teach these Muslims a lesson" and get rid of them (ibid.).

> This is what we have to do, [...]. That is what the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, the Bajrang Dal, the Shiv Sena, the Rashtria Swajamsevak Sangh and all the other associated organizations of our political family, the Sangh Parivar, will do one day. And the whole world should be grateful, because these Muslims are evil people. (ibid.)

Gupta makes his position very clear and even cites Golwalkar, the founder of the RSS, whom he calls the "Guru Golwalkar, the longest serving Hindu leader," in considerable length. Following Golwalkar, Gupta's vision of India is that of a uniform, unified Hindu nation where no other religion, culture and language have the right to exist except those of the "Hindu race."

> The non-Hindu people in Hindustan must adopt the Hindu culture and language, must learn to respect and hold in reference Hindu religion, must entertain no ideas but those of the glorification of the Hindu race and culture, i.e., they must not only give up their attitude of intolerance and ungratefulness towards this land and its age-old tradition but must also cultivate the positive attitude of love and devotion instead — in a word, they must cease to be foreigners, or may stay in the country wholly subordinate to the Hindu nation, claiming, deserving no privileges, much less any preferential treatment — not even citizen's rights. (R 123-4)

Gupta wholeheartedly agrees with Golwalkar's arguments and conclusions, agitating against pluralism and diversity in every conceivable respect. He insists that this is "the message to these evil Muslims" (R 124). Gupta further stresses his point by pointing out his fanatic determination, that of his followers and all other like-minded people.

> The Ram Janmabhoomi temple will be built. No matter how many lives have to be sacrificed to ensure it. Our blood will irrigate the dusty soil, our sweat will mix the cement instead of water, but we will build the temple, Mr. Diggs. Mark my words. (ibid.)

Gupta's discourse illustrates that he incarnates the very intolerance, single-mindedness and hostility of which accuses 'these evil Muslims.' In stark contrast to the proponents of the conciliatory secularist position — which, tellingly, is represented first and foremost by the Muslim Sarwar — Gupta is unwilling to make any compromises or effort of trying to understand those viewpoints which do not agree with his own ideas. For Gupta, the only valid perspective is

the one he believes in and he dismisses all conciliatory dialogues and other efforts at achieving a compromise between opposing positions. Again in contrast to the others, he considers violence as appropriate, outright necessary, means for defending the absolute status of his truth version, for realizing his plans and for eliminating all those who oppose them.

## IV.2.v A Plea for Reconciling Diverging Truth Versions

On the whole, *Riot* is a twofold search for the truth. Firstly, it is a detective story about Priscilla's murder and secondly a metahistoriographic novel that discusses the history of communal violence in India by using the fictional riot in Zalilgarh as example. The novel addresses at great length and in great detail the questions concerning potential backgrounds, circumstances and dynamics of communal violence in general.

Despite all the 'identified documents' and 'unidentified accounts' which provide the reader with many details and pieces of information, the 'whole truth' remains undisclosed and only graspable in the form of its many different, sometimes contradictory versions. This applies most obviously to the detection of Priscilla's murderer. The reader is presented with several suspects and versions of what might have happened but she cannot be absolutely sure of the correct solution. Even though one version, namely the one according to which Makhan Singh killed Priscilla after he was commissioned by the Hindu-nationalist fanatic Gupta to teach Lakshman and Priscilla a lesson, is the most likely version, it is still only a version with a high degree of probability. Furthermore, *Riot* strongly suggests that the truth about Priscilla's murder does not really matter. The real issue in *Riot* is not Priscilla's death and the detection of her murderer but the background of the Zalilgarh riot and the true history of communal violence in India.

In contrast to the question of who murdered Priscilla, the question of which position is the most valid one regarding the history of "Hindu-Muslim-collision" and the best solution to it is answered rather unambiguously. At first sight, this seems to be in contradiction to the novel's extensive presentation of various politico-religious views of different people and factions. The novel's multifocalizational perspectival structure seemingly suggests that no version of the history of communal violence is the unambiguously true and universally valid one. By virtue of its pluralistic formal, stylistic and perspectival features, especially its tessellated construction, *Riot* principally questions the possibility not only of assembling all the existing pieces of information but also of fitting them together correctly so that they become a perfect whole, and thus obtaining knowledge of the complete truth. Furthermore, the fact that the narrating I, the entity which assembles and presents the documents to the reader, remains anonymous,

additionally devaluates the search for the complete, absolute truth. It draws attention to the manipulative power of selection and ordering the selected documents in a certain way, thereby suggesting a certain reading and interpretation. An important result of the novel's dynamics of constantly changing focalisation is that the reader can never be sure which character tells the 'whole' truth or else what he or she believes to be true. In order to draw their conclusions, readers are forced to fully engage in the intricacies of the debate and carefully weigh all the different viewpoints. By virtue of its perspectival structure and its approach to representing the history of communal violence, *Riot* is the fictional example of its fictional history professor Sarwar's ideal of "nonsectarian histories of sectarian strife" (R 64). It follows Sarwar's plea for not "abdicat[ing] the field of religious conflict to the chauvinists on both sides" (ibid.). The novel reproduces and propagates the condition of democratic debate and the equitable co-existence of a plurality of viewpoints that compete for primacy without resorting to violence. It endorses this diversity of opinions and implies that it is beneficial to a community.

However, *Riot* clearly promotes the moderate conciliatory position of secularists like Lakshman and Sarwar on the phenomenon of communal violence, its causative factors and its possible antidotes while it denigrates the Hindu-nationalists' one as put forward by Gupta. There are several factors for creating this bias. Firstly, it is indicated by the sheer quantitative majority of conciliatory secularist voices and the greater amiability of characters like Lakshman, Sarwar and Gurinder Singh, which represent these perspectives. Secondly, Diggs, who by virtue of his role as journalist appears to have the most neutral, disinterested position and is assigned the status of an objective uninvolved outside commentator, voices condescending evaluations of Sarwar and Lakshman while he utters derogatory comments on Gupta already in the very beginning. Thirdly, while Gupta personifies the Hindu-nationalist position in the most repugnant manner, being highly suspect of being responsible for Priscilla's death, *Riot* lacks an analogue figure personifying the sectarian, extremist Muslim position. The only negative Muslim characters are Fatima's husband who threatens to kill Priscilla, the boys who stab the Hindu boys who install banners with anti-Muslim-slogans in the Muslim neighbourhood or the men who throw bombs during the procession. All of these characters are shown to be victims of their deprived social conditions and to act out of helpless anger rather than in a calculating manner from a position of power like Gupta. Furthermore, none of these characters at any point is given the room to voice his political opinions. The omission of a character voicing the Muslim extremist position is problematic as it sidelines, even dismisses, the influence of Muslim

extremist polemics in fostering communal tensions and instigating violent clashes between Hindus and Muslims.

The fact that Gupta and by implication his position are denigrated thoroughly is a clear sign of the novel's bias against Hindu-nationalist beliefs and political ideas. Gupta is shown to clearly stand out as the one whose way of thinking principally contradicts and endangers the pluralistic democratic structure propagated in *Riot*. The Hindu-nationalists' claim to being the defenders of the absolute historical truth, their non-acceptance of alternative versions and their exploitation of their own 'truth' for their political schemes is implied to be a major causative factor of communal violence and inimical to inter-communal peace. Negating the Hindu-nationalist position, *Riot* insinuates that the proponents of all different truth versions need to acknowledge their relativity and be willing to accept the existence of others, no matter if they concern historical facts or religious beliefs.

My reading of *Riot* suggests that it projects neither religion per se nor any one single religion such as Islam or Hinduism as roots of communalism and communal violence. Instead, the novel blames the intolerance of single-minded fanatics such as the Hindu-nationalists towards those who have views deviating from their own. The novel unambiguously promotes sympathy for the moderate consolatory secularist position. This it does not primarily because it sanctions their truth versions about the historical past and their religious beliefs as the only correct one. The real reason, I contend, is that *Riot* endorses their tolerance towards proponents of other truth versions and their willingness to try to find a compromise in order to enable a peaceful co-existence.

# IV.3 "A story of love that carries, within it, the story of his hate."[181] Guilt, Justice and Re-Individualisation in Raj Kamal Jha's *Fireproof*

> There is no burden I carry, whatever the dead may say. Because I am alive, I can choose what to remember, I can choose what to forget. (F 372)

Raj Kama Jha's *Fireproof* (2006) is a metahistoriographic crime novel that discusses the historiography and the implications of communal violence in present-day India. Jha (*1966) is an Indian journalist, managing editor of India's largest newspaper *The Indian Express* and novelist who lives in Gurgaon, Haryana (North India). Like his journalistic work, his fictional writing is motivated and pervaded by social commitment and criticism.[182] All his novels, which are often inspired by news items from the media, refer to precarious topics of present-day India. These range from domestic violence to communal tensions and mass violence — delicate issues which are part of every-day Indian life but hardly discussed in detail in the Indian media.

*Fireproof* uses the specific historical context of the historical Gujarat pogrom of 2002 to negotiate the issue of violent clashes between Hindus and Muslims in particular and the question of how religious alterity and violence relate to each other in general. Blending the genres of historical fiction and crime novel, and even incorporating a 'play-within-the-novel,' *Fireproof* tells the story of how the dead victims of the pogrom haunt the novel's protagonist-focaliser Mr Jay, who represses his memories of having witnessed acts of atrocious violence as the member of a Hindu mob and being guilty of the crime of non-assistance of persons in danger.[183] By virtue of its many different modes — including its fantastic elements, its intermedial references,[184] and its variety in terms of text types, styles of speech and typography —

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[181] F 358.

[182] Apart from his latest novel *Fireproof*, he has written two novels: *The Blue Bedspread* (1999) and *If You are Afraid of Heights* (2003).

[183] As Gabriele Rippl and Annie Cottier have convincingly argued, *Fireproof* can be described categorized as a trauma novel. For more details see Rippl's "Stumme Augenzeugen - Funktionen erzählter Fotos in englischsprachigen postkolonialen *trauma novels*" (2011) and Cottiers "Haunted Whispers from the Footnotes: Life Writing in Raj Kamal Jha's *Fireproof*" (2013).

[184] An expert in the field of intermedial narratives, Rippl has published several articles that extensively analyse *Fireproof* in terms of its intermedial elements. In her texts, Rippl especially focuses on the eminent role of the reproductions of press photographs contained in the novel and the novel's general references to the medium of photography. For more details of this highly enlightening approach to Jha's novel see especially Rippl's "Erzählte Fotos. Foto-Text-Beziehungen in Raj Kamal Jhas Roman

Jha's novel incorporates a plurality of fictitious witness accounts and verbal as well as visual pieces of evidence in order to prove Mr Jay's guilt and to tell several stories of the pogroms' fictional victims — both alive and dead.

In *Fireproof*, a group of dead victims of the Gujarat pogrom decide to have their stories told and to prosecute the protagonist Mr Jay to "give ourselves the promise of a better future, maybe some justice as well" (F 6). Mr Jay had been part of a Hindu mob who watched as they burnt down houses, raped and killed Tariq's mother, tortured, mutilated and killed Shabnam's parents, raped and killed Abba's pregnant daughter-in law and even cut the unborn baby from her body. Having repressed all memories of the violence, he now sits in a hospital's maternity ward, waiting for news of his wife who is giving birth to their first child. Under the guidance of their leader and spokeswoman Miss Glass, the dead manage to trick Mr Jay into accepting the severely deformed newborn of Abba's daughter, which miraculously lives, as his own son. After having recognized that the eyes are the only intact as well as beautiful thing about his son, Mr Jay names the baby Ithim and takes him home. Soon after, he is contacted by Miss Glass who forces him into following her directions by promising him that she can help him heal Ithim. Mr Jay embarks on what he thinks is the quest for the cure for Ithim but what really is a journey to disclose the details of his own crime and confront the memories of his guilt.

On his path through the riot-ravaged city with Ithim, Mr Jay is presented with several pieces of evidence of atrocious violence including photographs and detailed eyewitness accounts attached to the email Miss Glass sends him. Oblivious to his own involvement in the violence, however, he perceives them with a mixture of bewilderment and indifference. In a place called "The Hideout" (chapters 19-21), an eerie, flooded area where the dead have taken refuge from the city on fire, Mr Jay is made to watch the performance of a "play, in two short acts" (F 330). This play stages a public hearing where the three objects Book, Watch and Towel give their eye witness-accounts of what happened to Tariq's mother, Shabnam's parents and Abba's daughter. With the help of the bizarre clown figure named Bright Shirt, they again confront Mr Jay with striking visual and verbal evidence of his crime. They also reveal that Ithim, whom he has grown to love as his own son, is the foetus that was cut from the body of Abba's daughter. It is only after his flight from the "Hideout," however, that Mr Jay acknowledges his repressed

*Fireproof* (2006)" (2008), "Stumme Augenzeugen - Funktionen erzählter Fotos in englischsprachigen postkolonialen *trauma novels*" (2011) and "Postcolonial Ekphrasis in the Contemporary Anglophone Novel" (2014).

memories. Shortly before the re-union with his wife and his real son, who is completely healthy as Mr Jay finds out to his great relief, he eventually confesses: "*I am guilty*" (F 374).

The summary shows that *Fireproof* contains two story lines — the 'Quest for Ithim's Cure'-story line and the 'Pogrom'-story line — which seem strangely unconnected to the reader until the epiphany during the 'public hearing'-scenes. The reader's epiphany at such a late stage results from the novel's perspectival structure. The extra-diegetic narrating Mr Jay retrospectively recounts his journey towards recognition nearly exclusively from the perspective of his earlier self, which has repressed any memories of his deeds. Consequently, the reader is kept ignorant of Mr Jay's involvement in the pogrom for most of the plot. Only the revelation of Ithim's true identity by Bright Shirt enables the reader to see the link between the two narrative threads and join them to form a single story. By making the readers realise their conditions of their earlier blindness, the perspectival structure points out the difficulty, or even well-nigh impossibility, of making people see what they have chosen not to see. Conversely, the many visual and verbal evidences fulfil the function of making the reader see the true meaning of communal violence and the inadequacy of standard historiographic accounts of events like the pogrom of Gujarat. The whole story is a blend of metahistoriographic and crime novel elements which takes advantage of its many modes to tell the usually marginalised or silenced stories of the victims of communal violence and to hold a perpetrator responsible for his crimes.

I argue that the telling of victim stories untold by official historiography, the re-individualisation of the victims through their stories, the plea for greater empathy with the victims and the plea for convicting perpetrators of communal violence for their crimes are at the heart of *Fireproof*. The centrality that the novel assigns these issues in its fictional representation of communal violence suggests that they are relevant to answering this thesis' central question of *Fireproof*'s position concerning the link between religious alterity and violence. I contend that the socially committed journalist and writer Jha uses *Fireproof* to promote the view that it is not religion per se, any particular religion such as Hinduism or Islam, or the existence of religious alterity which are at the root of the violence between Hindus and Muslims. Instead, *Fireproof* illustrates the detrimental consequences of the process of 'hostile Othering' on the basis of religious affiliation, exposes the inadequacy of mainstream historiographic accounts and media reporting on communal violence and makes a plea for the re-individualisation of victims as well as perpetrators and the prosecution of the perpetrators.

In order to prove my hypothesis, I will analyse in detail the nature of the novel's generic features, its great variety of modes and its perspectival structure, how they interact and to which effect. On the basis of this analysis' results I will evaluate their implications for *Fireproof*'s position regarding the phenomenon of communal violence in particular and the relation between religious alterity and violence in general.

## IV.3.i A 'Riot Tourist's' Imagination Running Wild — *Fireproof* as Metahistoriographic Crime Novel

> All of the above is fact. All of what follows is fiction. (*Fireproof* ix)

Of the novels on communal violence in India discussed in this thesis, *Fireproof* integrates the least verifiable historical background information into its narrative proper. And yet, similar to the other novels, *Fireproof*, too, not only refers to historical events. Like *Riot*, it is actually based on a piece of factual writing. The novel grew out of Jha's newspaper article "John Brown and a dog called Chum" published in *The Indian Express* 13th May 2002.[185] Due to several indicators — the same narrating voice in both the introductory pages and the "Author's Note", the reference to the introductory pages as "fact" and to the following pages as "fiction, and the lack of a sub-heading which would signal a different categorization — the introductory pages are implied to originate on the same level as the "Author's Note," i.e. with the journalist persona Jha.

In contrast to the other novels, which explicitly refer to many historical details on their diegetic levels, *Fireproof* with few exceptions banishes these facts and figures from its story level and relegates them to its 'margins' — the already mentioned untitled introductory pages, "The Opening Statement," "The Closing Statement" and the closing "Author's Note" (F 385-88). *Fireproof*'s first two pages unmistakably inform the novel's readers that the fictional story of *Fireproof* refers to a real incident of communal violence in Gujarat, which started in February 2002 and devastated the North Indian state for almost a month.

> The Gulbarga massacre [...] was one of a series across the state of Gujarat that killed over 1,000 men, women and children, 70 per cent of them Muslim, ostensibly as revenge for the death of 59 Hindu passengers in an attack on a train by a Muslim mob the previous morning. (F viii)

In his "Author's Note," the journalist and writer Jha matter-of-factly supplements the scarce facts and figures he provided in the introductory pages. The facts, which he gives beneath the

[185] As was already pointed out, Jha is managing editor of *The Indian Express*.

subheadings "The events in Gujarat, in brief" (F 385) and "The numbers, as of June 2006" (F 386), include a considerable set of precise dates, place names, figures and numbers (F 386).

> **The numbers, as of June 2006:**
> **All figures are government figures, including official intelligence estimates:**
>
> **Total number killed: 784 Muslims, 258 Hindus.**
> **Number of houses destroyed: 12,000**
> **Number of shops looted and burnt: 14,000**
> **Number of villages affected: 993**
> **Number of towns affected: 151**
> **Total number of cases filed by the police: 4,252**
> **Cases where charges were framed: 2,019**
> **Cases closed for what the police said was 'lack of evidence': 2,032**
> **The Supreme Court of India has played an exemplary role in prodding and pushing the state's institutions to deliver justice. On its instructions, some cases were shifted out of state to ensure a free and fair trial. And all cases, including those previously closed, have been ordered to be reviewed.**
> **Total number of cases reviewed: 1989**
> **Cases re-opened: 1763**
> **Cases where trial is on: 28**
> **Number of cases ending in convictions: 10.**
> **The trial in the train-attack case and the Gulbarga massacre are currently on hold pending the Supreme Court's instructions.** (F 396-97, emphases in the original)

The exclusion of these facts and figures from the diegetic level and their subsequent supplementation highlights their marginal status in the novel as a whole. The marginality of these facts and figures does not, however, result from a received irrelevance of what they refer to — i.e. the actual violence and cruelty, the individual suffering and the pain. As Gabriele Rippl has pointed out, it is the novel's

> Hauptverdienst [...], die hinter den Zahlen verborgenen Schicksale sichtbar zu machen, Tätern und Opfern Namen zu geben und ihre individuelle Geschichte zu erzählen. (2008: 12)

In line with Rippl's observation I argue that it is by assigning the facts and figures such a marginal status that *Fireproof* implies their inability to actually represent what they refer to and their uselessness for the imaginative endeavour to make palpable the full scope and meaning of what they merely record. This stance becomes clear already in the three introductory pages where the novel performs its ostentatious shift from the factual mode of narration to the fictional mode.

Untitled, they are redolent of the introductory paragraphs excerpted from a newspaper reportage portraying the present state and the history of a place where something noteworthy occurred, something grave — something like arson and murder. They resemble the written and published piece by some persevering journalist who seeks out and explores such a place after the usual short-dated media hype has abated, driven by the intent to feel out the untold secrets

of the place and narrate the 'true' history of the past events, to impart additional details and background information which had been disregarded or were unknown so far. Like that hypothetical journalist might do, the narrating voice at the beginning of *Fireproof* describes what it observes and perceives; and it supplements this description with associations and connotations — in terms of thoughts or feelings — which are triggered by the ambience of the place.[186]

> Just four policemen at the entrance, one fast asleep. The shells of houses where parents and children, husbands and wives, brothers and sisters, friends and strangers, once lived. Blackbrown streaks on the walls. Lines, short and long. Stains, big and small. Windows, their bars twisted. Their molten metal congealed in bursts of black iron rash. The ribs of what was a car. Still parked in a driveway. And debris all around. Like a tonne of black flower petals strewn in the yard to welcome ghosts. (F vii)

Unlike the hypothetical journalist, however, the perceiving and narrating entity in those first pages of *Fireproof* does not need to restrict itself to facts and figures and resorts to the use of its imaginative powers. In this scene, which strongly resembles an evocation, the narrating entity performs the necromancer-like role of summoning the spirits of the missing and the dead in the devastated yard where the debris resembles "black flowers" which seem "to welcome the ghosts" (*Fireproof* vii). After the narrating entity has established the frame by describing the (factual) scenery, it recedes and hands over its narrative function to the ghosts it has summoned so that they proceed and tell their story: "All of the above is fact. All of what follows is fiction" (F ix). The driving force behind the narrative of *Fireproof* is the imagination of a journalist stimulated by the debris having accumulated in the wake of a communal riot. Confronted with those countless ugly and mute, yet uncannily evocative, memorials of relentless violence and great suffering, the 'riot tourist' decides to put his imaginative powers in the service of seeking justice — even if it is only poetic justice in the restricted frame of a fictional text.

It is the novel's highlighting of historiography's inadequacy concerning the representation of communal violence and its telling of the usually untold stories hidden and suppressed by fact and figures in order to re-individualise victims as well as perpetrators and seek justice, which make *Fireproof* a metahistoriographic novel: By exposing the inability of facts and figures to

[186] In an interview Jha admitted to having taken on the role of a "riot tourist" ("The Jha interview." December 03, 2006) — visiting places where large scale atrocities occurred. In his article Jha rather cynically introduces the intentions of what he calls his "riot tour of the city [of Ahmedabad]": "[W]hen I went to Ahmedabad, I wanted to bring home, as souvenirs, a charred body. Or a slit uterus. I wanted to pick Mr Modi's pocket for his handkerchief. And smell, in the warm dankness of his Hindu sweat, the Muslim tears he's wiped" ("John Brown and a dog called Chum").

represent and make palpable the actual scope and intensity of suffering, the novel accuses the usual historiographical and other accounts of communal violence, which centrally rely on these kind of factual data, of the same shortcomings. The fictional story itself does not concern itself with telling verifiable historical details. Instead, as Annie Cottier points out, "it does what only fiction can do: it invents, narrates, and authenticates testimonial accounts of those who have already died and of those whom trauma prevents from speaking" (305). Furthermore, and contrary to the implications of its factual text passages as regards narrative mode and content, *Fireproof* is not a conventional historical novel written according to the conventions of realist narration. The novel's status as an example of metahistoriographic fiction is eminently sustained by its extensive use of a great variety of modes.

*Fireproof* is an example of what Wolfgang Hallet refers to as "multimodal novel." Following Wolfgang Hallet, I use "multimodality" as a term that designates the extensive "integration of [a great variety of] modes and media in novelistic narration" (129). These modes comprise many different phenomena ranging from "non-verbal symbolic representations" to "non-narrative semiotic modes," including intermedial references, transgeneric narration, formal and typological experimentation (ibid.). In a multimodal novel, asserts Hallet, "novelistic narration [is but] an integral part of the narrative novelistic mode along with other written modes" (ibid.). A multimodal novel may

> integrate photographs, all sorts of graphic representations, reproductions of non-narrative texts and genres, texts in different fonts and typographical styles, reproductions of printed texts from other sources and documents, non-verbal types of symbolization and different discursive modes, like transcripts of non-narrative conversation, recorded voices, or telephone-dialogues into the narrative discourse. (130)

Its transgressive playfulness clearly makes *Fireproof* an example of the multimodal novel. *Fireproof* indulges in the many possibilities that a multimodal novel has at its disposal in order to tell the stories usually untold in historiographic accounts: It freely transgresses generic boundaries, for example when it integrates a 'play within-the novel' in the two chapters before the last. It includes different speech styles ranging from those of clinical diagnosis and user manuals to poetic, highly metaphorical language, and different text types such as emails, poems, and telephone dialogue-transcripts. Its formal design features a great variety regarding font type and size. Furthermore, *Fireproof* not only includes several intermedial references to different visual media such as photography, television and the Internet but also inserts reproductions of

three photographs into its text.[187] Last but not least, it features different narrative modes, ranging from realist to magical realist style. The primary function of the magical realist mode is to assign its dead and living characters the same ontological status and let them interact on the same diegetic level.

Dead people and objects speaking and interacting with living people, a baby that is alive despite its grievous physical mutilation, a city submerged under water where the dead find refuge from a city on fire — *Fireproof* is pervaded by fantastic, 'magical' narrative elements. The magical realist mode of narration has been described as the "amalgamation of a rational and an irrational world view" (Chanady 21). Lois Zamora and Wendy Faris argue that by virtue of their techniques and their tendency to "admit a plurality of worlds,"

> magical realist texts [...] often situate themselves on liminal territory between or among those worlds – in phenomenal and spiritual regions where transformation, metamorphosis, dissolution are common, where magic is a branch of naturalism, [...] an extension of realism in its concern with the nature of reality and its representation. (6)

Since magical realism is so well suited "to exploring – and transgressing – boundaries, whether the boundaries are ontological, political, geographical, or generic" (ibid. 5), it is the narrative mode par excellence for *Fireproof*, which attempts to represent the liminal experiences of atrocious violence and cruel death, which are 'beyond words.' Through additional levels of experience made accessible by its magical mode, *Fireproof* enables unusual, or even empirically impossible, perspectives, and voices usually unheard such as those of the dead. In their "Opening Statement," "the dead" make their appearance on stage and rise to speak. Acting as representatives of all the dead and alive victims of the pogrom referred to in the novel, they directly address the reader and draw her attention to their crucial, active role in the following narrative.

> **We, the undersigned, do solemnly affirm in this, our opening statement to you, the reader, the following:**
> [...]
> 8 **That some of us had our throats slit, some were Stabbed in the back, some in the front. Most of us, however, were set on fire.**
> [...]
> 14 **That considering all of the above, we decided death should not be an excuse for inaction, [...]. That instead of trying to fight the fire with our tears,**

[187] For the novel's use of intermedial references, especially its play on the relationship between text and photography, see Gabriele Rippl's article "Erzählte Fotos. Foto-Text-Beziehungen in Raj Kamal Jhas Roman *Fireproof* (2006)" (2008).

**perhaps the time had come for us to give**
**ourselves the promise of a better future, maybe**
**some justice as well.**

**15** That this is the story of how we went about it.
(F 3-6, emphases in the original)

In this "Prologue," the dead enigmatically announce the subsequent action, point to their crucial role in it and voice their desire for enabling by their deeds "a better future" and obtaining "maybe some justice." All of the fifteen characters who 'sign' the opening statement "in order of appearance" later on appear within the subsequent narrative just as they have announced. While they do not refer to the focalizer-protagonist by his actual name Mr Jay in the "Prologue," the dead already introduce him there as the narrator as well as protagonist of the action:

**16** [...] **its narrator, though, is not one of us but**
**one of the living. He is a man waiting for news**
**of the birth of his first child, his wife in the.**
**operating theatre. In a hospital that night where**
**we lay dead and dying in the city on fire.**[188]

After their appointed narrator has told his story and the proper action has ended in the last chapter fittingly titled "Curtains," the dead reappear. In the "Epilogue (The Closing Statement)" they again jointly address the reader — concluding and commenting on the preceding action and announcing their future plans. As becomes already clear in the "Prologue," the dead have important functions in the novel as a whole and play a greater role in the plot than merely providing the introductory and the concluding words. Firstly, they haunt the oblivious protagonist Mr Jay, indirectly interact with him on the plot level and manipulate his actions when they engage in a dialogue with him through their spokeswoman Miss Glass. Secondly, they whisper their individual stories in the "footnotes" which are inserted after each chapter in the novel's first two parts.

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[188] F 6, emphasis in the original. Both the "Prologue" and the "Epilogue" are subdivided into individual stanzas of varying length and recited by a group of fifteen dead characters who refer to themselves as "the undersigned" in the beginning. One could also say that the stanzas are 'sung' by a kind of the 'chorus of the dead.' *Fireproof* contains a great variety of references to the genre of drama and can even be said to include elements of Greek tragedy. This is not discussed in detail in this chapter, however, as it does not contribute to the analysis' general focus on the novel's discussion of the relation between religious alterity and violence. However, *Fireproof*'s use of dramatic elements will be discussed in the frame of a separate article where I will compare it with Mahesh Dattani's play "Final Solutions" (2002). Dattani's play, which focuses on the phenomenon of communal violence and how it destructs familial harmony, also makes extensive use of the 'chorus'-element. For further information on the chorus of in Greek tragedy, and in tragedy in general, see Rehm 1992: 51-61; Bushnell 2008: 35-7, Halleran 2009: 203-06; Calame (2009); and Riemer and Zimmermann (eds. 1999).

The magical realist mode makes accessible the memories, thoughts, and feelings of murdered people and endows them with a voice in order to "express the 'real' that is 'beyond language' in stories" (Bowers 81) and thereby regain individuality. Like most magical realist texts, *Fireproof* seeks "to disrupt official and defined authoritative assumptions about reality, truth and history" (Bowers 95) and therefore shares their subversive potential based on "their in-betweenness, their all-at-onceness [which] encourages resistance to monologic political and cultural structures" (Faris and Zamora 6). This the novel does primarily by providing the dead with agency so that they can persecute one of the perpetrators. I argue that *Fireproof*'s inclusion of dead characters on the plot level and their indispensable role in enabling the persecution of one of the perpetrators points to the fact that most perpetrators go scot-free in 'real life.' It accuses the political conditions in present day India, characterised by the pervasiveness of communal discourse, of being detrimental to the establishment of justice.

This plea for judicial justice is reinforced by *Fireproof*'s crime novel plot. With its protagonist Mr Jay who is persecuted by his victims and forced to acknowledge his guilt of non-assistance, *Fireproof* clearly qualifies as crime novel that according to Tony Hilfer keeps "the problem of guilt and complicity, of menace and victimization at the fore."[189] Based on Hilfer's four different categories of protagonists resulting in variations of the guilt theme, *Fireproof*'s Mr Jay can be categorised as "the guilty bystander"-type who "from motives of venality, fear, weakness, or vicarious participation fails to reveal the murderer" (Hilfer 4) or, like in *Fireproof*, is guilty of the crime of non-assistance. By making the persecution and conviction of the guilty bystander Mr Jay the centre of its plot, *Fireproof* clearly implies the necessity of holding perpetrators individually responsible.

[189] Hilfer 3. Another crime or rather gangster novel, which discusses the process of 'hostile Othering' and communal violence, is Vikram Chandra's *Sacred Games* (2006). Unlike Jha, who refers to the Gujarat pogrom of 2002, the historical context of Chandra's novel is that of the Bombay riots in the wake of the Babri Masjid's destruction in 1992. *Sacred Games* is dominated by the intricacies of the struggle between two major Mumbai criminals Ganesh Gaitonde and Suleiman Isa who stage their struggle for supremacy as religious antagonism. Strikingly both start defining their enmity in terms of religious antagonism and create the concept of Hindu bhai versus Muslim don only *after* the occurrence of Muslim-Hindu riots in Bombay. From then on, both stage the battle between their gangs as a fight between religiously defined groups struggling for supremacy in Mumbai, thus endowing it with a kind of pseudo-legitimacy, as a fight in the name of a (their) religion, for the rights, for retaliation of the wrongs afflicted on their respective followers. As is suggested by the example of Ganesh Gaitonde, their identification as Hindu bhai and Muslim don respectively is an unloved necessity in the face of the religious oppositions that deeply move their own community's members who expect their leaders to take sides

Following up on this, it is of eminent importance that *Fireproof* at no point provides the reader with Mr Jay's reasons for committing his crime. By sidelining the perpetrator's motif the novel highlights the larger social and political conditions of his crime and treats it as "Folgeerscheinung von sozialen Abhängigkeiten, der Angsterzeugung durch die Massenmedien, der Intoleranz gegenüber politisch Andersdenkenden" (Nusser 143). *Fireproof* clearly evokes the discourse and politics of communalism, which pervades Indian society and partitions it into religiously defined camps facing each other in hostile opposition. Mr Jay's crime is thus implied to be part of the vicious circle of continuous 'hostile Othering' on the basis of religious affiliations and sporadic escalations of violence.

Furthermore, by casting Mr Jay as an 'ordinary' man and loving father instead of a monster *Fireproof* effects that "the implication of the universality of guilt widens a fortiori" like in crime novels with similar protagonists (Hilfer 4) and suggests that the tendency to committing Mr Jay's crime is inherent in every human being. These implications are reinforced by the fact that "the reader's role is discomfitingly close to guilty bystander since we too witness crimes. By continuing to read we become accomplices after the fact" (ibid.). This is even more pronounced in *Fireproof* as the reader remains blind to Mr Jay's crime for the most part of the plot despite all the references to his guilt.

## IV.3.ii *Fireproof*'s Perspectival Structure — Misleading the Readers by Restricting their Perspectival Scope

Although Miss Glass and the dead pull the strings behind the scenes and make Mr Jay set out onto his path towards recognition, they are not the narrators of "the story of how [they] went about it" (F 6). Instead, they let Mr Jay recount his experiences as they point out at the end: "this is Mr Jay's story. We made no changes in his narrative, not one word" (F 379). He does so almost exclusively from the perspective of his earlier self, the anxious loving father who has repressed the memories of his crime. *Fireproof* features what in Wolf Schmid's model of narrative point of view is Type 2: "A non-diegetic narrator takes on the standpoint of a character who functions as a reflector" (107). In *Fireproof*, Mr Jay's earlier self functions as the reflector figure or focalizer and only in few instances does the narrating Mr Jay intervene. These interventions all directly address the reader

> DON'T listen to the dead, please do not listen to the dead — whatever they tell you, whatever fancy name or un-name they wish to go by, howsoever lyrical they may wax, because once you lend them your ears, they will nibble at your guilt, feed on your pity, swallow you whole, from head to toe, make no mistake. That's why I need to tell you, right in the beginning, there's only one thing in this story about which there's no doubt, in fact, there's no doubt, none at all. And it's this: it was, as they say in their opening statement, that night when it all started. [...] All the rest of it, everything else that follows, ninety-nine point nine nine per cent of it, doubt dispute distort deny. [...] In short, do whatever you want. Because it doesn't matter, the dead are going to get me in the end. Come what may, any which way. (*Fireproof* 11-12)

Except for these enigmatic warnings, which adumbrate the narrator's knowledge of the future and his concealment of background information, the reader's perspective is restricted to that of the seemingly oblivious protagonist-focalizer whose level of awareness she shares. The reader only sees what the experiencing, perceiving protagonist Mr Jay sees; she only gets to know those things, which the strangely uncommunicative, listless and confused protagonist hears or reads and how he contextualizes them. The narrating Mr Jay does not impart to the reader the real reasons for why he gives the advice of "do not listen to the dead," withholding the indispensable insider-knowledge. In order to make sense of what she reads, the reader is dependent on the protagonist's scarce efforts to contextualise and explain his experiences. The assignment of the double role of narrator and focalizer-protagonist to Mr Jay and the restriction of the reader's perspective to that of the focalizer-protagonist is of central importance as it makes the reader blind regarding the verbal and visual evidence bespeaking of Mr Jay's crimes and lets her belief in Mr Jay's status as an 'ordinary' man and loving father. By virtue of her following the protagonist's steps, seeing with the protagonist's eyes and being dependent on his

judgements, the reader must realize in the end that she, "looked and looked, but did not see" (F 358) just like the protagonist.

At the same time, the intervening warnings of the narrating Mr Jay against listening to the dead have the effects of arousing puzzlement and curiosity in the reader. Urged on also by their interest in figuring out the strangely vague relation between the 'Quest for Ithim's Cure'-story line and the 'Pogrom'-story line, they read on and do listen to what the dead have to say.

## IV.3.iii The 'Quest for Ithim's Cure'-Story Line — Re-Individualising a Perpetrator

The story line about Mr Jay's quest for Ithim's cure has two major functions. Firstly, by establishing a strong bond between Mr Jay and Ithim, it makes the reader perceive of him as an emphatic, sentient man who loves his son and cares for him even though he is severely disfigured.

> He brings the baby to his face, kisses him on the black strip of charred skin that is the baby's forehead, kisses him on the eyes, on the mound of his nose, the knife-cut of his lips, kisses him on the funnel-flap of his left ear, on the right where there is none, just skin stretched taught. He lifts him up, lowers him again, [...] looking at him, at his son, and then in the mirrors as well. To see how they reflect, father playing with son. [...] he lets his son rest on his chest. [...] And he stays still, waiting to hear the beat of the heart inside his son against his chest. Father and son, son and father. (F 245-46)

A similar function is fulfilled by Mr Jay's memories of his mother. In a dream sequence he re-experiences how he feared for the life of his mother who was stung by a scorpion when he was a child: "I am her son. To save her life is my duty" (F 299). And when he wonders why he is having that dream just now, he remembers how his mother's death had filled him not only with grief but with "a crushing, permanent sense of loss" (F 305).

This drawing of Mr Jay as loving father and son is contrasted with an image of him as a man with viciously violent tendencies. After the two strangers Nice Boy and Good Girl have uttered comments depreciatory and insulting comments about Ithim, he imagines their cruel murder in great, gory detail, including the peeling off of the girl's skin and the cutting out of her heart.

> In all the pounding, the cutting, the stabbing, I have forgotten Good Girl's heart. So back to the knife that's now almost twice, thrice its weight, covered with blood and flesh and skin. I carve under her breasts; its slow going, as muscle and bone impede the blade's path. Her blood gushes out as if on tap [...] I can see her heart now, a red-brown mass inside her body, trembling like an animal, triangular and deformed. [...] Using both hands, I hold her heart and pull. (F 261)

In a highly different way, this sequence fulfils the same function like the scenes where Mr Jay shows his capability for loving and caring for his son and his mother: All these scenes make Mr Jay appear as an 'ordinary' man who harbours the potential not only for great love and empathy but also for atrocious violence. In other words, the portrait of Mr Jay makes us, the readers, able to understand the nature, meaning and immense scope of what Hannah Arendt referred to as "the banality of evil:" We the readers are capable of grasping the immense power of context and circumstance that may turn an ordinary man into an accomplice in horrible crimes. As a consequence, we the readers end up seeing Mr Jay the perpetrator as a diversely different human being instead of a monster, even after we have realised the truth about what he possibly did.

## IV.3.iv The 'Pogrom Story Line' — Re-Individualising the Victims

### *A "Play, in two Short Acts"*[190] *– Fireproof's Staging of a Court Trial*

Since the readers are only privy to the thoughts of Mr Jay the loving father, however, they cannot relate the protagonist's tale of the quest for his baby's cure to the many interspersed accounts of atrocities relating to the Gujarat pogrom. They belief in the authenticity of Mr Jay's disinterested puzzlement when he is confronted with the many reminders of his guilt on his journey through the riot affected city. The riddle's solution is only provided in the novel's chapters 22, "The Last Act – I" (F 331-350) and 23, "The Last Act – II" (F 351-359). These chapters constitute a "play, in two short acts" which stages the public hearing of the witnesses Book, Watch, Towel and Bright Shirt.

I argue that these two chapters, which form a "play-within-the-novel,"[191] constitute the novel's climax as part of the crime novel plot: In a setting that imitates a public hearing, Miss Glass plays the two roles of the judge chairing the hearing and the prosecuting attorney. She produces pieces of evidence and interrogates the 'eye witnesses' Book, Watch and Towel (331-50) and the character Bright Shirt (351-59) who has brought Mr Jay to the "Hideout." Mr Jay, who watches the performance, is cast as the defendant while the readers, by implication, are simultaneously assigned the roles of both jury and audience. The scenes of this 'play' are the crucial link between the two story lines and bring about the readers' epiphany. They enable

[190] F 330.

[191] On the forms and features of the "play-within-the-play" and the possible functions see Manfred Pfister's *Theory of Drama and Analysis of Drama* (1993), 223-30.

them to unite the story lines, which previously seemed to be strangely unconnected, make them realize that Mr Jay is guilty of atrocious crimes and they themselves are guilty of blindness.

The special status and format of the two chapters is pointed out by the narrating Mr Jay who announces that he has "to change the narrative itself, present events just as they were. The last act, so to speak, in this drama of the absurd. A play, in two short acts" (F 330). In the following two chapters, the structuring of the text and the formal design combine in such a way as to actually integrate a play into the narrative. The conventions of how a play is reproduced in print are followed in many regards: Each act is preceded and concluded by a lengthy stage direction, set in italics, which contains a detailed description of the scenery on stage. The action represented on stage primarily consists of the witnesses' interrogation by Miss Glass, who does not appear on stage herself but poses her questions and interjects her comments from off-stage. Each utterance on or off-stage is clearly assigned to one of the characters in that it is preceded with his or her name. Occasionally, the character's speeches are supplemented with additional stage directions — always given in parentheses in italics in order to signal their different status — which provide descriptions and characterizations of the actors as well as further details regarding the scenery.

> BOOK (*Ignores this interruption.*) Tariq had read this story over and over again, [...] For his homework, he had to answer three questions. [...] But before he could answer these questions, they came.
>
> WATCH Who came, who came, who, who, who? Tell us, Book.
>
> BOOK If you keep butting in, I can never tell.
>
> TOWEL (*Speaks for the first time; hers is the softest voice.*) Watch, unlike you, I can't hear very clearly, [...] Let Book finish and then you can ask your questions.
>
> BOOK Thank you, Towel, I will try to speak louder. [...] I don't know how to say it, it sounds so selfish, but you know what went through my head at that time?
>
> MISS GLASS (*From off stage.*) You are among friends, Book, just say what's on your mind, don't bother how it makes you look. We are not here to judge. (F 336-37)

Having been ear- and eyewitnesses to the incidents described in the written accounts attached to Miss Glass' email, the objects give their 'personal' accounts of what they saw, heard and felt: Book tells the story of the rape and the murder of Tariq's mother, Watch that of the mutilation and murder of Shabnam's parents and Towel recounts how Abba's daughter in law was raped and strangled and how her unborn baby was cut from her body. Supplementing the written accounts with further details, "filling in most of the blanks" (351), they also describe the four perpetrators which they all simply refer to as A, B, C and D. As it turns out the three objects were involved in the composition of the written reports "Tariq" (171-87), "Shabnam" (188-204) and "Abba" (205-16), which Mr Jay receives as attachments to Miss Glass' email

complemented with one photograph each.[192] While the reports were most probably composed by Bright Shirt with the assistance of the three objects, it is from the perspectives of Tariq, Shabnam and Abba that they are told. They turn their protagonists Tariq, Shabnam and Abba into focalizers, evoking the impression that they are the authors of the reports; that they recount what they saw in a distanced, objective manner.

> Our first eyewitness is a boy. Name is Tariq, he is ten, or, at the most, eleven years old. [...] A boy with not enough clothes in this city – he shouldn't stand out in any crowd. Still, they got him. [...pb...] Through the drift of the fog and the smoke from fires far away, through the yellow haze of the neons in the front, through the black-white exhaust of vehicles that streak past his house, through the tears that bend, refract everything he sees, Tariq witnesses the woman lying on the street. She is his mother. Tariq's eyes also witness four men. A, B, C and D. [...] Tariq hears them say things to his mother, he sees them do things to his mother, he hears words and he sees action. (F 171-73)

In all three reports, the narrators stay anonymous, creating the appearance of objectivity. This semblance of the reports' objectivity and evidentiary value is reinforced by the insertion of the reproductions of three blurred black-and-white photographs, one of which precedes each report. These pictures seem to complement the factual accounts by visual evidence, confirming the objective truthfulness of their contents.

The pictures' function of suggesting utmost reliability due to their implied objectivity is echoed by the object-status of the principle witnesses who give their accounts during the 'public hearing'-play. The fact that three of the four witnesses are the non-human characters Book, Watch and Towel and that these objects are cast as sentient creatures full of empathy is the most intriguing aspect of the public hearing-"play." In contrast to the written accounts, which have a decidedly objective narrative style, the objects' oral accounts are highly personalized and charged with the emotions of Book, Watch and Towel who supplement their own feelings and thoughts. This establishes a stark contrast to Mr Jay who, despite being a human character, seems incapable of feeling empathy for the victims of the atrocities he has witnessed. While their primary purpose in *Fireproof*'s plot is to tell what they saw and heard and thereby proof Mr Jay's guilt, the three objects fulfil a further function on the novel's meta-level. Book, Watch and

[192] The fact that the narrators of the written reports narrator are not Tariq, Shabnam and Abba is only disclosed at the beginning of the 'public hearing' when Miss Glass calls upon Book, Watch and Towel to supplement their earlier reports. The question of who took those photographs is answered on the diegetic level by the photographer himself: During the "play, in two short acts," it is disclosed that Bright Shirt was the one who collected the objects Book, Watch and Towel and that he, too, must have taken the pictures by order of Miss Glass who requested that he collect all kinds of visual and material evidence.

Towel are shown to have much in common with the dead humans as they also belong to the 'community of victims' of the communal violence as Bright Shirt points out:

> Just like the three of you, Book, Watch, and Towel, we too were together last night after we were killed. We, the people. There were many of us, I am losing count. And just like you on the pavement, we were piled up as well. In heaps in hospitals. (*Fireproof* 352)

By establishing this 'community of victims' including both humans and non-humans, Bright Shirt points to the process of de-individualization and being reduced to mere objects which those involved in large scale violence undergo. He thereby blurs the boundary between objects and human beings, which are also turned into mere objects, first through the process of 'hostile Othering' and then through the violence done to them. The effect is heightened by the fact that the three objects are described as sentient, sensitive creatures, sustained by the way they behave and speak. Their ambivalent, paradox status of sentient objects fulfils several functions: Firstly, as Miss Glass is eager to point out, their object-status ostentatiously endows their statements with utmost credibility.

> We begin tonight with three characters who are special, special because of what they endured before we picked them up. [...] They are here because they are eyewitnesses and they are earwitnesses. And unlike us, people who were killed, these three are objects. That's why their story will be objective. And their words will, therefore, carry more weight. (F 333)

Secondly, as Miss Glass' ironic tone of voice indicates, the objects' status as sentient beings challenges the very notion of objectivity by showing that even mere objects are incapable of delivering unbiased accounts untainted by feelings. Thirdly, the sentient object evokes and problematizes the figure of the anonymous victim, which has been turned into an insentient, de-individualised, un-human object through the process of 'hostile Othering' culminating in the violent act. Like Bright Shirt and the other human beings involved in the violence, the three objects were also reduced to objects of mob violence solely due to their having been identified as belonging to the religious community of 'the Muslims.' Like them, they witnessed how human beings are de-individualized and de-humanised, how they are absorbed by and reduced to their respective roles as Muslim victims in the morbid 'play' of a communal riot.

Apart from the two names of Tariq and Shabnam, which are identifiably Muslim names, there or no further references to the victims' religious affiliations. This highlights the novel's implication that in the case of communal violence an individual's religious affiliation is reduced to a mere label which either degrades human beings indiscriminately to targets of or perpetrators of atrocious violence. Conversely, all witness accounts foreground the status of

victims and perpetrators as members of some family — as fathers, mothers, sons, daughters and grandfathers — assigning it the central factor with regard to their sense of self and belonging. The three objects describe how individuals cease to be family members capable of and entitled to love of others, how they become either anonymous members of the attacking mob or anonymous members of the victimized community instead and how they are thereby reduced to objects like books, watches and towels — mere objects or subjects of mob violence.

## *The Footnotes*

A similar process of re-individualisation takes place in the "footnotes" — those text units wherein the dead victims of the pogrom provide information on who they were and how they died, "whispering in these *footnotes*" (*Fireproof* 293). Of these witness account monologues or "footnotes," the novel contains fifteen in total. They are interspersed between most of the chapters of the novel's first two units. With the exception of chapter "18. Skipping Holy Angel, Ithim misses the meeting," which concludes the novel's second part, and the three chapters 11, 12 and 13, which contain the witness accounts of the fate of Tariq's mother, Shabnam's parent's and Abba's daughter, all other chapters are followed by a "footnote." The "footnotes" interrupt the 'Quest for Ithim's Cure'-plot and attract attention to the continuous presence of the dead.

I argue that *Fireproof*'s footnotes point to the marginalisation of victims' stories in most accounts on communal violence despite their omnipresence in what I would like to term the subconscious of the public sphere. The footnotes' continual presence on the one hand and the inability of the reader to contextualise them and assign them meaning with regard to the plot echo the condition of the stories of the victims of communal violence: Like the footnotes, they are omnipresent but repressed and relegated to the margins of public consciousness. Similar to the footnotes, victims' accounts of atrocious violence are usually considered interruptions of the 'plot' of ordinary life which fail to be integrated within that plot as they do not seem to make sense.

In *Fireproof* the dead are far more than mute, passive onlookers or de-individualised figures in death statistics who detachedly watch and comment on the protagonist Mr Jay's actions. Instead, they effectively draw the strings behind the scenes and take part in the action on the diegetic level through their leader Miss Glass, thereby contributing to the plot in a decisive way, even though the reader is unaware of this for a long time. The take on the active role of authors who tell their death stories in their own way. They cast the unknowing Mr Jay as the

protagonist in the story of which they are the authors who dictate the narrative's contents and its manner of rendering. Irrespective of the Mr Jay's divergent wishes or ideas, they decide that he must play the role of investigator and detector of his own crimes. While directing Mr Jay's moves unbeknownst of him, the dead themselves enter and leave the narrative's diegetic level at libitum just like they announce in the "Prologue:" "Some of us will walk in, walk out of the margins, lose our way between the lines, reappear to speak in the footnotes" (F 7).

The "footnotes" are isolated text passages none of which exceeds the space of one page. Although they lack headings they are most clearly set apart from the rest of the novel — both formally and in terms of typography, which signals their interruption of the main text. All "footnotes" are preceded by a blank page and most are also followed by one. All "footnotes" are printed in the same sans-serif type which differs greatly from the serif type used in the rest of the text, also due to its much smaller font-size. This typeset suggests the low volume or probably indistinctiveness of the uttered words, a circumstance which is pointed out by Glass when she uses the term "whispering" with reference to the manner in which the footnote's protagonists speak. Furthermore, they don't contain any periods apart from the one at their very end, suggesting that the speakers uttered their statements under their breaths and in a tearing hurry — driven by the urge to tell their story and thereby regain the individuality which lost as a result of the process of 'hostile Othering' on the basis of their religious affiliation and the violence they were subjected to.

> **I am Doctor I, I was forty-four years old, I have a wife and three children, two sons, fifteen and thirteen, and a daughter, ten years old [...] I would have survived the fire, too, had it not been for the driver of the van, they stopped him, they asked him who we were, what our names were, and he told them, if he had lied, if he had made up two Hindu names for us, they would have let us go, I doubt they would have forced two doctors in uniform to undress, Doctor 2 and Head Nurse sitting next to me, Doctor 2 tried to open the van so we could get out but there were so many people pressing against the doors that it was impossible, maybe the van driver just got frightened and didn't have the presence of mind to lie, anyway now it's all over, my wife should sell the house and, with our children, leave the city, [...] I never thought this would happen to me, usually those killed in such situations are the poor who live in slums and have no security, of all the patients I treated in this city almost ninety-nine per cent were Hindu but then these things don't matter, a mob doesn't think, you can't argue with a thousand people at one time, [...] I heard Head nurse scream, her face the last thing I saw through the smoke, she trying to cover it with her shawl.**[193]

"Doctor I"'s monologue is the sixth "footnote" and it resembles most other footnotes in many respects. Like most of the dead persons recounting their experiences and last thoughts before their deaths, he is one of the undersigned members of the chorus of the dead who speak

[193] F 117, emphasis and small type in the original.

in the "Prologue" and the "Epilogue."[194] And again, like all the others, he begins his monologue with a declaration of identity and a short biographical part wherein they provide details about their own person, their families and their jobs. Each of the monologues seems to be the response of a dead person to someone's request of providing details about themselves and their lives — their origins and their jobs, their loved ones und families, their hopes and their worries — and of giving an account of how they died.

In view of the many personal details they provide, it is remarkable that only seven of the "footnote" speakers refer to the reasons why they were attacked and killed or to their being Muslims. Specific references to their religious affiliation and its being the reason for their having been singled out and turned into victims are only named by two of them: "Doctor 1" surmises that the driver could have saved him and the other people in the taxi if only he had been able to spontaneously make up Hindu names for them and laments that the mob does not care about the fact that most his patients were Hindus. In a similar vein, "Head nurse" points out that she might not have been killed if the mob had given her the opportunity of proving that she was really a Christian and hence not part of the mob's Muslim target group.

Others like "Screaming Woman from TV news," "Old Bird," "a member of the Audience" and "Fruitseller" only imply that they are Muslim by recounting how after the train attack in Godhra, which the Gujarati state government immediately blamed on 'the Muslims', they were turned into a homogenous group targeted by murderous mobs: "Fruitseller," for example, recounts how "all of *us*" were worried and that "after the train attack there was fear the *we* would be targeted" (*Fireproof* 151; my emphases). In short, none of the footnote speakers invests religion with meaning regarding his or her sense of self. For all of them it is hardly more than a label that deprived them of their status as diversely different human beings and consequently turned them into anonymous members of the religious community of Muslims which the

[194] The other eight whisperers who are also undersigned members of "The Prologue" are the Holy Angel hospital's "Ward Guard" (first footnote, F 31), "Doctor 2" like Doctor 1 from the Holy Angel hospital (second footnote, F 49), the cleaning woman "Old Bird" (third footnote, F 69), a "Taxidriver" (fourth footnote, F 85), "Miss Glass" (seventh and fifteenth footnote, F 131, 293), a "Fruitseller" (eighth footnote, F 151), an anonymous "Floor Body" (eleventh footnote, F 223) and "Head Nurse" also from the Holy Angel hospital (twelfth footnote, F 239). The other five monologues are those of "a member of the Audience," referring to the audience of the play performed in "The Hideout" (fifth footnote, F 103), not further specified "body 3" and "body 3" (ninth and tenth footnote, F 159, 169), the "Window Curtain" in Tariq's home (thirteenth footnote, F 251), "Screaming Woman from the TV news" which Mr Jay had watched after having returned from hospital with Ithim (fourteenth footnote, F 267).

Hindu mob holds collectively responsible for the attack on the train at Godhra and the death of Hindu pilgrims.

Instead of pointing out their speakers' sense of belonging to the community of Muslims, their grudge against their Hindu murderers and their hatred directed indiscriminately against all 'the Hindus,' all "footnotes" resound with worries and hopes regarding their loved ones. Expressions of love and care for their relatives take centre stage in all "footnotes" and thereby cast every single speaker individually as member of a family. The fact that all those whispering from the "footnotes" were mothers, fathers, sisters, sons, daughters, grandmothers, grandfathers, husbands and wives is shown to be the most vital aspect of their identity. Not their membership in a religious community but their bonds to their families is implied to be the crucial factor ruling their sense of self and belonging.

The whispered monologues effect the re-individualization of their authors. Ostentatiously negating their religious affiliations the status of important aspect of their individual identity, Doctor 1, Fruitseller and all others dismiss the validity of categorizing people on a singular basis. They demonstrate the danger inherent in these indiscriminate, singular identifications and denounce this kind of 'hostile othering' as it arbitrarily makes any person the potential target of violent attacks by strangers solely due to their belonging to a (constructed) category of people. By virtue of telling their individual stories, the previously anonymous victimized 'Others' cease to be nameless, faceless members of the homogeneous target group of 'the Muslims' without history of their own. Defying the status of anonymous victims, they cast themselves as mothers, fathers, sons, daughters, wives and husbands, and thereby regain their individuality and thereby humanness. Furthermore, they manage to exceed the margins from which they are speaking and re-root themselves in the same spatio-temporal context as Mr Jay.

## *Miss Glass*

A similar process of re-individualization and re-rooting occurs with regard to the character of Miss Glass. Miss Glass who is the spokesperson of the dead and 'attorney' for the riot's victims dead and alive, and who is most probably one of the victims as well, is the contact person linking the dead and the novel's protagonist Mr Jay. In their first dialogue, she insists that Mr Jay give her a name, and that he call her by that name. I argue that this naming procedure is the first step away from the absolute anonymity of a stranger, towards Mr Jay's perception of her as individual person (F 87-101, esp. 95f.). She is a complete stranger to him, being not merely unknown to him, but rather outright other: She does not only belong to the 'other side' in that

she is dead and Mr Jay is alive. She also belongs to the 'othered side,' in that she is one of all the other anonymous members of a group which he had categorized as constituting the absolute Muslim 'Other' earlier. This strategy had enabled him to allow that atrocities were committed indiscriminately against the seemingly uniform members of that group. In that he gives her a name, she gains individuality in Mr Jay's perception. He increasingly loses the ability to keep her at the status of the absolutely unfamiliar other. At the same time, he senses that Miss Glass is able to seize and wield power over him due to her disquieting knowledge not only of his name but also of a considerable amount of personal details. While he does not know her she seems to know him, which results in lifting her to a superior position:

> an entire world had gaped open; now she had not only a voice but a certain character as well, a hard-edged confidence, almost arrogance, and a sense of proprietorship over me and the baby. She had talked to me in the manner of one who makes you feel she knows you better than you do yourself, who will always be several steps ahead of wherever you are. (F 100-1)

It is not only the fact that Miss Glass' knows more of him than he does know about her that unsettles Mr Jay. What disquiets him even more is that she alludes to and seems to be familiar with details of his past that he cannot relate to, that he pretends are unknown to him, i.e. his repressed memories of having witnessed and letting happen the atrocities during the riot.

> Who was this woman, where had she come from? …she had said that talking to me was like a dialogue of the deaf, … all I knew about her was that she was hidden behind a fortress of her own making. And from that safe perch, she had not only disarmed me, she had forced me to surrender, lose the battle. (*F* 101)

The narrating Mr Jay retrospectively realizes that by giving her a name and recognizing her as an individual, he has entered her territory and enabled her to be his superior who dictates the rules of the game — the game which aims at proving Mr Jay's guilt and making him acknowledge it.

Despite all the gruesome details, the verbal and visual evidence provided in the footnotes, the written reports of Tariq, Shabnam and Abba and the objects' oral accounts 'on stage,' it is only Bright Shirt's testimony during the "play," however, which establishes the crucial link between the atrocities on the one hand and Mr Jay on the other hand. Bright Shirt recounts how he acted as an assistant on behalf of Miss Glass' orders after Mr Jay had been identified as one of the perpetrators A, B, C and D by Abba's dead daughter in the Holy Angel hospital "that night." He explains that he helped Miss Glass to lure Mr Jay into the traps laid out by her

and the dead. Bright Shirt, in short, supplements the missing pieces and joins them together so that the reader is able to 'see the whole picture.'[195]

> BRIGHT SHIRT [...] I found myself in the Burns Ward of Holy Angel. [...] there was Abba's daughter-in-law with her baby. [...]
> [...]
> BRIGHT SHIRT [...] she had seen a gentleman walk into the hospital with his pregnant wife. She said she was sure he was one of the four who had come to her house earlier that evening.
> BOOK, WATCH, TOWEL (*All together, in one shout, almost a scream.*) Who was it? A? B? C? D? Tell us, tell us, we need to know, we remember the faces. Each one of them.
> [...]
> WATCH (*After a long silence.*) If you ask me, I will say B, the one with the striped shirt. The one who just watched. Who watched as Tariq's mother was attacked, who watched as Abba's daughter-in-law was killed. (F 352-56)

While the novel's readers have now realised Mr Jay's involvement in the atrocities and even know which role he played, the protagonist still fails to remember. Towards the end of the 'public hearing,' Miss Glass complains about Mr Jay's obstinate refusal to acknowledge his guilt despite all the efforts to make him see: "We sent him messages detailing everything you three had told us and more. He read every word but he doesn't admit it, even to himself. I doubt he ever will" (F 358). Miss Glass and the dead cannot understand how it is possible that Mr Jay, even after having been confronted with all the evidence, still remains oblivious or at least feigns ignorance:

> We sent the gentleman several reminders of his guilt even as he took care of the baby; we sent him pictures of the three of you lying on the heap, we sent him pictures that you see on stage. He looked and looked but he did not see. [...] It is as if he has no memory of the three incidents, as if he went inside his own head and removed that part of his brain that recorded them. (F 357-58).

Obviously Miss Glass feels the urge to point out that looking is not the same as *seeing*, that, in other words, Mr Jay saw things without really *seeing* them — understanding them, acknowledging their connection to his own person.

[195] He also reveals that it was him, not the victims Abba, Tariq and Shabnam, who wrote their witness accounts. He thereby fulfils the function of representative and spokesman of the survivors who might be too traumatized to bear witness and publicly recount their stories themselves.

## *The Photographs and other Intermedial Elements*[196]

Throughout its whole narrative, *Fireproof* intensely evokes the semiotic field of visuality and attracts the reader's attention to the visual senses. This is pointed out by Rippl who calls the novel "ein typisches Beispiel für das, was man in der Literaturwissenschaft heute einen 'intermedialen' Text nennt, da er zwei Medien, Fotografie und Text, kombiniert, die kopräsent sind" (2008: 13). This is achieved through its many references to different visual media such as television and internet, its actual integration of visual media in the form of pictures and conspicuously frequent references on the diegetic level to the different characters' acts of seeing, looking, gazing and glancing. This eminent role of and references to the visual realm is pointed out by Rippl who states that "particular in chapters 11, 12 and 13 [...], terms such as 'eyes,' 'to see,' 'to look' etc. crop up constantly, and throughout the novel visual media, acts of eye-witnessing, pictures and focus are mentioned" (2016: 146). In the chapter 11 "Tariq" alone, the word eye occurs thirteen times, the verb to see thirty-eight times, the verb to watch eleven times, the verb to witness eight times, the verb to look six times. In all cases and throughout the narrative, vision, eyesight and the different ways of seeing are linked up not only to the processes or acts of perception and witnessing but also, and importantly so, to those of recognition and understanding.

The three black-and-white of photographs in *Fireproof* are silent visual witnesses of Mr Jay's deeds. They are part of the story level and play a crucial role as visual evidence in the plot. They are integrated into the narrative in three ways: Firstly, the photographs are mentioned and referred to by characters in the story. Secondly, reproductions of the photographs images are inserted into the text of the novel between paragraphs. The photographs are presented both to Mr Jay on the diegetic level and to the novel's readership alongside the witness accounts "Tariq," "Shabnam" and Abba" in order to illustrate them and confirm the truthfulness of their content. Thirdly, they are included in the form of ekphrastic passages.

Being visual artefacts, the pictures in *Fireproof* affect the senses in a different way than the written passages and eyewitness accounts. They differ importantly from the accounts of the dead in that they clearly belong to the world of the living ruled by laws of nature and reason. And while they are similar to the objects' accounts as regards their implicated objectivity, they differ from them in that they were not present at the events themselves and are not themselves

[196] For this section I am especially indebted to my supervisor Prof. Gabriele Rippl who has extensively researched the intermedial elements of *Fireproof*.

able to 'see'. In *Fireproof*, the pictures of the crime scenes function both to complement the written evidence and simultaneously to draw attention to the visual senses. Not only do they directly affect them, however. By virtue of their blurred quality, in combination with "the protagonist's ekphrasis [...] that does not match her own reception of the picture" (Rippl 2015: 147) they call into question the absolute reliability of visual evidence and the things perceived with the eyes: "While documentary photographs are commonly understood as a means of authentication, in Jha's novel the words de-authenticate the pictures by describing things not to be seen in them." (Rippl 2015: 150) The reproductions of the press photos included in the novel illustrate both the necessity and at the same time the precariousness of some kind of verbal contextualisation for visual evidence. They make the reader aware of the ways in which the visual senses function — foregrounding both their advantages as well as disadvantages, indicating that there are many degrees of 'seeing' and that to see a thing does not necessarily mean to acknowledge or understand its meaning.

As Miss Glass and the dead admit perplexedly, not even the visual evidence they confronted Mr Jay with did make any difference with his capacity or willingness to remember: "We sent the gentleman [...] the pictures of the three of you [i.e. Book, Watch and Towel] lying on the heap, we sent him the pictures that you see on stage. He looked and looked but he did not see" (F 357-58). *Fireproof*'s inclusion of the pictures and the fact that their referents need to be spelled out by the detailed witness accounts which they introduce implies that visual evidence on its own is not enough, that looking at things is not enough. In contrast to both the "footnotes" and the verbal witness accounts they only disclose 'their' stories and their meanings with the help of contextualising information and the use of imagination. Furthermore, this quality points to their liability to re-use in other contexts where they might be employed to illustrate completely different stories. The reproductions of photographs in the novel play a deceitful role as they seem to be direct, unmediated representations of reality and thereby give a treacherous promise of transparency and objectivity. In short, *Fireproof* uses the photograph reproductions in order to negate the equation of seeing and knowing or even understanding.

As the pictures are presented together with the witness accounts and are explicitly referred to in them, it is suggested that they are actually representations of the three scenes of crime mentioned in the witness accounts. Their inclusion at these points in the narrative implies that they actually show the burnt down house of Tariq, the burnt out auto rickshaw of Shabnam's father and the burnt down house of Abba. All three photograph reproductions are followed by

ekphrastic text passages of varying length which purport to describe them and lead over to the story they refer to:

> OUR first eyewitness is a boy. Name is Tariq [...] That's his house in the picture. A simple frame. Simpler than the house a child would draw when told to draw a house. Just a long rectangular box, the windows cut out as an afterthought. The house built, as if, not to defy the elements (the rain, the sun, the dank or the chill), but instead to surrender itself to them, its plaster to be streaked, its corners to be shadowed, its walls to be eroded. Unprepared, totally, for fire, for men intending to kill and burn. That's why the door's gone, the windows and the ceiling, all shattered into countless pieces scattered inside and out. There are some clouds in the sky but no evidence of smoke, it's bright and clear. We will come back to this house later. Now let's return to last night. (F 171-2)

While the photographs seem to support what the ensuing accounts describe, and the accounts describe incidents that fit what the photographs show, there can never be anything like absolute certainty when it comes to the interpretation of images, texts or even a combination of the two media. This is highlighted by the fact that the ekphrastic passages not just describe what is visible in the highly blurred pictures but add details and step by step turn transform them into a story: Similar to the other accounts the photo preceding Tariq's fulfils the important narrative function of an "Auslöser für das Erzählen von Tariqs Geschichte."[197] What is needed, *Fireproof* suggests, is that the stories behind the pictures are told and listened to because, as Rippl points out, "ohne Beschreibung und 'Beschriftung' blieben die Fotos in Jha's Roman zwar Fotos der Zerstörung, hätten aber keine spezifische zeitlich-räumliche Verortung und keine spezifische Botschaft" (2008: 16). Only the pictures' contextualisation and interpretation on the one hand and viewers' willingness to pay attention on the other hand enables real understanding and authentic empathy.

I argue that the ways in which the pictures and intermedial elements in the narrative are closely related to the fact that the experiencing Mr Jay represses the knowledge of his guilt and

[197] Rippl 2008: 15. These ekphrastic passages, which not merely describe the pictures but turn them into a story, are clearly intermedial elements. When referring to intermediality, this categorization is based on Werner Wolf's definition of the term. According to Wolf, intermediality is "das innerhalb eine Kontaktnehmers fassliche Resultat der Inszenierung eines fremdmedialen Kontaktgebers (in Form von Imitation, Integration oder Kombination), wobei Kontaktgeber und -nehmer verschiedenen Medien im weitesten Sinn zugehören, d.h. unterschiedlichen Kommunikationsmitteln, die sowohl durch technische und institutionelle Übertragungskanäle als auch durch bestimmte Zeichensysteme charakterisiert werden können" (1996: 88). As Wolf points out, it is first and foremost the actual staging of another medium — by virtue of imitation, integration or combination — within a literary text that is to be considered as genuine intermediality. With this definition in mind, *Fireproof* can be said to integrate intermedial elements.

the narrating Mr Jay attempts to keep the reader blind to his earlier self's crime.[198] When the protagonist finds one of the photographs in a hospital room, it is not the protagonist but the narrator who delivers the detailed one-page-long, yet highly matter-of-fact-like description of what can be seen in it. This is indicated by the shift from the past tense to present tense in the detailed descriptive passage itself and the concluding remark.

> It was a photograph that may have slipped there by accident. [...] And because it was the only thing in the room that I could pick up and take away with me, like a souvenir, I did: [display of the photograph] The photograph shows a pavement. A street in the city, [...] How do I remember all this in such precise detail? It's odd, I am not sure now, looking back, how much was in the picture [...] I do still have the photograph, of course. (F 61-62)

The important aspect of this ekphrastic passage is that the narrator does *not* contextualise the photograph. He refrains from establishing a link between the picture and his earlier self and instead creates a distance between them. Mr Jay restricts himself to playing the role of a 'presenter' who does not have to use his 'personal' narrative style. He professes that he refrains from contextualising or even commenting on either photographs, written accounts or the 'public hearing'-play, ostensibly for the purpose to avoid being accused of presenting insane matter or distorting facts: "What followed next, I shall not describe, I shall only report. I shall not comment lest you charge me later with deception. I shall not do anything to influence you" (F 330). In a similar vein, this applies to the stories of Tariq, Shabnam and Abba, which Mr Jay receives as attachments to the email that Miss Glass sends him. Before 'presenting' them, Mr Jay points out that he absolutely refrains from analysing or commenting on these stories.

> I shall not summarize anything, will not read between the lines, until you have read them, for yourselves, all three files and seen the three pictures. (You can come back to them when you have the time, read them again, read them as many times as you need.) (*Fireproof* 167)

The narrator's ostentatious eschewal of contextualizing or explaining the verbal and visual elements has several effects. It serves the narrator's purpose of endowing himself with the delusive semblance of being an impartial, objective absolutely trustworthy reporter. At the same time, his professions of desistence from contextualising the visual and verbal evidence lest he could be accused of manipulation sound hollow respectively as the readers finds out that he

[198] Another form of intermedial contact occurs when Mr Jay is watching TV late at night after his return from the hospital with Ithim. As Mr Jay is zapping through the different channels, the narrative not only imitates the aesthetics of television viewing and film but also again contains ekphrastic passages of television screen stills that show images of the communal violence which Mr Jay seems not to be aware of at all. He barely pays attention to these contents, as they had nothing to do with him, his past or his life in general.

only did so in order to render them blind. While the photographs and other images, just as the written witness accounts included in the email, become part of the narrative as a whole, they stay strangely unrelated to the protagonist Mr Jay who appears to be uninvolved regarding the violence which all the visual and verbal pieces of evidence refer to.

By including the photographs and the ekphrastic passages in such a way, *Fireproof* obviously addresses its readers. They must realise retrospectively that even though they were shown and did look at all pieces of evidence and read all the stories, they at first did not really 'see,' i.e. understand. Because they lacked contextual information, they were blind to the crucial links which would have enabled them to connect the pictures and the stories and join them to become one meaningful whole. Thus, *Fireproof* makes its readers aware of their uncritical as well as cursory 'reading' of photographs on the one hand and their need for assistance with contextualising them on the other hand.

## *Ithim and Darshan*

The link to the realm of the visual and the focus on the visual senses is again reinforced by the baby Ithim. Having "perfectly shaped, fully functional" eyes (13) and "perfect eyebrows" (15) despite his being severely deformed physically in every other respect, the baby Ithim is a key element in the novel. The baby is at the same time a character — and as such victim as well as a witness — and also the incorporated, visual evidence of Mr Jay's guilt. By accepting him as his son and naming him, Mr Jay begins establishing a bond with him, gives the baby power over him and thus makes the first step towards acknowledging the baby's real meaning. As his very name indicates, Ithim serves as the crucial link between Mr. Jay's subconscious (it) which contains the repressed memories of his guilt, and his consciousness (him) which at first perceives nothing but a deformed baby. Just like Mr Jay looks at all the verbal and visual evidence he receives without admitting, without *seeing*, their real meaning, he at first also looks at Ithim, the creature that is the epitome of the brutal violence he witnessed and thus a result of his own in-action, without really *seeing* him. Mr Jay does not admit Ithim's symbolic meaning, the fact that he is in a way the creator of Ithim even though he might not be his father in the ordinary sense. Unlike the photographs, which only represent the resulting signs of destruction of the violence in the present, Ithim was present during the violence itself, having seen and experienced it. He is surviving victim and living evidence at the same time. The violence has therefore not only left marks on his body but changed his inner self. Furthermore, unlike the

pictures, Ithim cannot only be looked at but see himself. Ithim is all eyes. And with these eyes he establishes eye contact with Mr Jay.

By not just looking impassively at Ithim, but looking the baby in the eyes, seeking and establishing eye contact with him, Mr Jay begins to perceive the baby as his son. Soon, Ithim ceases to be a mere liability of a severely deformed baby whom he has to take care of but his son Ithim. He begins to think of the two of them as "father and son, son and father" (245). The emotional bond of love between father and son is the decisive factor which eventually breaks down Mr Jay's wall of indifference, forces him to countenance his memories and confess his guilt, just like Miss Glass predicts.

> The baby is the one thing he cannot deny, he cannot forget. For one day and one night in this city on fire, he loved this baby because he thought it was his own, that he was the father. [...] And now he knows who the baby is, how it was forced into the world of the living, how its mother was killed, how he had a hand in all this, whenever he thinks about the baby, he will have to think about the fire, about the killing. Every time he looks at his own baby, [...] he will remember this one. [...] he has to carry the burden of a story he can never tell. A story of his love that carries, within it, the story of his hate. (*Fireproof* 358)

Having come to consider Ithim as his own son, having loved him, cared for him and struggled for his healing, Mr Jay cannot dismiss or forget this bond. By virtue of their eye contact and the bond thereby established between them, Ithim eventually becomes what Mr Jay after his recognition bitterly calls "my penance baby, my punishment baby" (F 361). It is by virtue of his penance baby's eyes that Mr Jay eventually begins to really *see*. When he yearns to be a caring and loving father for his real baby, the memory of this bond makes him eventually realize that he must admit his guilt and seek forgiveness from his victims in order to make this wish come true. If Ithim is conceived as *Fireproof*'s metonymic symbol of the wounds which 'hostile Othering' and communal violence inflict, then Mr Jay's quest for the baby's cure is successful in the end: The novel implies that the only cure for the wounds as well as the best way to prevent their infliction are compassionate contact with the victims resulting in acknowledgment of personal involvement, responsibility and guilt.

Clearly, *Fireproof*, suggests that seeing is a way to really *see* another person and establish real contact with him or her. Rippl has pointed out a further, culturally significant dimension of the novel's many visual references, arguing that "in addition to and in conjunction with photography, the novel repeatedly evokes India's visual cultures and the traditional practices of

*darshan*, the divine gaze" (2015: 146). *Darshan* is a form of actually touching the person or god with whom one has eye contact.[199] Lawrence A. Babb describes it as follows:

> In the Hindu world 'seeing' is clearly not conceived as a passive product of sensory data originating in the outer world, but rather seems to be imagined as an extrusive and acquisitive 'seeing flow' that emanates from the inner person, outward through the eyes, to engage directly with objects seen, and to bring something of those objects back to the seer. One come into contact with, and in a sense becomes, what one sees. (396-97).

Interestingly, this eye contact and consequently the intimate touch does not necessitate the presence of the other person or god. A visual representation (such as a painting or a photo) is enough. In *Fireproof*, however, the most prominent eyes are not on any reproduction of a photograph but belong to a character in the narrative, i.e. the mutilated baby Ithim. And the most frequently occurring eye contact is that between Ithim and the protagonist who describes his baby boy's eyes as the most perfect and beautiful eyes. According to Rippl, Ithim's eyes "resemble the alert and never resting eyes of the Hindu gods, whose attention nothing ever escapes." (2015: 146) It is Ithim's 'divine' beautiful and omniscient eyes and the eye contact between Mr Jay and Ithim that establish a bond between the two and, eventually, make the protagonist love and care for his son deeply. Eye contact, *Fireproof* implies, potentially entails the re-individualisation and re-humanisation of the 'Other,' enables empathy with the other person and decreases the tendency to subjecting him or her to atrocious violence. I argue that by assigning Ithim and *darshan* such an eminent relevance for making Mr Jay's feel empathy for his victims and acknowledge his guilt, *Fireproof* suggests that religious traditions have a potentially beneficial role in breaking the vicious circle of 'hostile Othering' and communal violence.

## IV.3.v Not a Hindu and a Muslim but Father and Son

Although *Fireproof* is based on the pogrom of Gujarat in 2002, the narrative relegates factual accounts and exact figures to its margins — "The Prologue," "The Epilogue" and the "Author's Note." Furthermore, it does not provide any specific reasons for why the members of different religious communities — in this case Hindus and Muslims — killed each other. Instead, *Fireproof* implies that the sporadic escalations of violence are merely symptoms of invisible structural violence pervading Indian society and politics, namely the continuous process of 'hostile

[199] On the concept of *darshan* in Hindu culture see especially Lawrence A. Babb's article "Glancing: Visual interaction in Hinduism" (1981) and Diana L. Eck's monograph *Seeing the Divine Image in India* (1981).

Othering' on the basis of religious affiliation. I argue that *Fireproof* questions the adequacy of ordinary historiographical and other official accounts of communal violence by telling the stories hidden and in a way silenced by fact and figures or relegated to the margins.

As the historian Gyanendra Pandey among many others has observed, most public and historiographic narratives prefer to engage in the search for reasons and remedies, but avoid talking about the individual violent acts in detail. At the same time, the voices of the victims, the stories of the individuals that have suffered from atrocities, are seldom, if ever, heard. The same applies to the voices of the perpetrators which usually are not heard, either. Similarly to the victims, the violent event turns them into members of a seemingly homogeneous, monolithic group — in their case 'the bloodthirsty mob'. More often than not, both the voices of the victims and the perpetrators are ignored, even suppressed due to their supposed potential to shake and subvert the fragile secularist peace. As Pandey notes, "the totalizing standpoint of a seamless nationalism" which is cultivated in India (2006: 43) — perpetuating the grand narrative that the harmonious co-existence of Muslims and Hindus in the secular nation state is the rule, whereas communal riots are horrible exceptions — ignores, mutes, or even stifles those individual voices that would speak of their specific sufferings and accuse individual perpetrators.

Leaving aside the futile quest for specific causative factors with regard to its protagonist and by implication in general, the novel focuses on the representation of the plight of the victims, the traumatisation of the perpetrators, the wretched condition of the community as a whole and of its members. The novel employs its multiple modes, especially that of magical realist narration, in order to speak the unspeakable and make the usually unseen things seen. Most importantly, by telling the stories of fictitious victims both surviving and dead, *Fireproof* re-individualises victims irrespective of their religious affiliations. The most important aspect in all stories, both as regards the accounts of the victims and the tale of the perpetrator Mr Jay, is not their religious affiliation, which was used to de-individualize and turn them into anonymous victims and perpetrators. Instead, it is eventually their status as members of a family — as fathers and mothers, sons and daughters, wives and husbands, grandmothers and grandfathers — which dominates their sense of self and belonging. The novel thereby attempts to break the vicious circle of 'hostile Othering' and communal violence. It exposes the inability of standard historiographic accounts to do justice to the history of communal violence, especially regarding the victims' plight. Furthermore, it denounces these accounts of perpetuating the process of

'hostile Othering,' reifying the communal divide by using the same monolithic categories of Hindu/Muslim and partaking in the de-individualisation of both victims and perpetrators.

A similar process of re-individualisation and re-humanisation takes place with regard to *Fireproof*'s protagonist Mr Jay, who is a perpetrator in the sense of having committed the crime of omission. The novel robs him of the protection provided by the anonymity of the mob and furthermore shows him to be not 'monster' but an ordinary man who is capable of love and empathy. Thereby, the novel underlines the necessity of re-conceptualising perpetrators as diversely different individuals who can and need to be hold responsible for their deeds. This suggestion is sustained by the fact that *Fireproof* is in part a crime novel which has its fictitious guilty protagonist persecuted for his deeds and makes him acknowledge his guilt. I contend that *Fireproof* denounces the fact that perpetrators of communal violence usually go scot-free and makes a plea for holding mob members personally responsible and convicting them of their crimes.

By enabling its readers to conceive of Mr Jay solely as a caring, loving father, and preventing them from establishing the link between Mr Jay and the evidence of atrocious violence which he registers with disinterested puzzlement, the novel's perspectival structure makes readers aware of their own blindness and disposition to averting their gaze from unpleasant things. It exposes the significant difference between looking at things and people on the one hand and really *seeing* them — understanding them, establishing contact with them, realising their true nature. *Fireproof* stresses the essential importance of this difference for the ability of human beings to feel empathy. Empathy, *Fireproof* implies, is enabled by really seeing other people and thereby establishing real contact with them as they cease to be anonymous 'others' and are reconceptualised as diversely different individuals. And it is this empathy for fellow human beings irrespective of their singular categorizations as Hindu or Muslims, which Fireproof promotes as vital for breaking the vicious circle of 'hostile Othering' on the basis of religious alterity and communal violence.

I finally argue that *Fireproof*, instead of blaming religion as such, any particular religion or the existence of religious alterity for communal violence, implies the beneficial potential inherent in the religious traditions of Hinduism. By its persistent evocations of the visual sphere and its establishment of a vital link between eyesight and seeing on the one hand and making contact, understanding and feeling empathy on the other hand, the novel conspicuously evokes the concept and practice of *darshan* in Hinduism (Rippl 2008, 2015). In my opinion *Fireproof*

suggests that if the practice of *darshan* were used for the sake of really seeing ones fellow human beings as diversely different individuals — most importantly as fathers, sons, mothers, daughters — instead of the hostile 'Other' because of their religious affiliation, it could help breaking the circle of 'hostile Othering' and communal violence.

# IV.4 "Maybe *Kashmiriyat* was an illusion" — The Demise of Communal Utopia in *Shalimar the Clown*[200]

> "We are all brothers and sisters here," said Abdullah. "There is no Hindu-Muslim issue. Two Kashmiri — two Pachigami — youngsters wish to marry, that's all. A love match is acceptable to both families and so a marriage there will be; both Hindu and Muslim customs will be observed." (SC 138)

Salman Rushdie's *Shalimar the Clown* is a revisionist historical novel about the historical Kashmir conflict. The gradual demise of the *Kashmiriyat* — the enacted utopia of communal harmony in Kashmir[201] — and the Kashmir conflict are the novel's central topics. I agree with Natasha Walter who in her review describes the novel as "an impassioned lecture on the roots of violence and the awful fate of Kashmir [...]" and claims that "the destruction of Kashmir is the true heart of this book" (2005: pars. 6-7). Told by an extra-diegetic narrator, *Shalimar the Clown* narrates the life stories of its fictional protagonists Noman Sher Noman aka Shalimar the clown, Boonyi Kaul, the fictitious US-ambassador to India, Maximilian Ophuls, and Kashmira aka India Ophuls, whose lives and deaths are closely linked both to each other and to the recent history of Kashmir. Being a complex allegorical tale of the fabled myth of the *Kashmiriyat* and its demise, the novel uses the fictional love- and hate-story of the Muslim Kashmiri Shalimar the clown and the Pandit woman Boonyi from the fictitious village of Pachigam to discuss the history of communal violence in Kashmir and the relation between religious alterity and violence.[202]

I argue that although its protagonist Shalimar the clown is seemingly cast as a religious terrorist the novel does not imply that religion lies at the root of communal violence. Instead, the novel imagines and revivifies on a fictional level the harmonious coexistence of different religious communities in Kashmir. On its allegorical level, then, *Shalimar the Clown* is really the

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[200] SC 299.

[201] On the idea of the *Kashmiriyat* see Malik 1ff. and 9-15.

[202] On the eminent importance of allegory in *Shalimar the Clown* and its functions see Neil Murphy's "The Literalisation of Allegory in Salman Rushdie's *Shalimar the Clown*" (2008). While I agree with Murphy's claim that Max is an allegory of "US imperialism" (354), I do not support his view that Boonyi represents Kashmir but see her as an allegory of Kashmiri Pandit population. Similarly, I do not conceive of Shalimar the clown not as an "Islamicist anti-United States terrorist" but as the novel's allegory of those Kashmiri Muslims who want to take revenge on those they hold responsible for the demise of an independent, liberal, pluralistic Kashmir.

tale of a religiously motivated assassination as it is the story of a man who as representative of the Kashmiris avenges the demise of the utopia of a pluralistic multi-religious community.

The Kashmiri village Pachigam is the epitome of lived and practiced *Kashmiriyat*. Diversely talented performers and gifted cooks from various religious backgrounds not only co-exist in peace but actually work together, eat together and share each others' social and cultural lives in every respect. When the Muslim boy Noman Sher Noman and the Hindu girl Boonyi Kaul fall in love and are allowed to marry, this is the ultimate proof of the villagers' belief in and practice of the *Kashmiriyat*. After a visit to the village of Max Ophuls, the US-American ambassador to India, Boonyi runs away with Max to New Delhi hoping that he will enable her to become a dancing star. Shalimar the Clown swears to murder not only his unfaithful wife but also Max. Out of anger and for the sake of taking revenge on the US-ambassador, Shalimar the Clown joins an internationally operating terrorist network and becomes a mujahedeen in order to be able to eventually reach the well protected Max.

In the meantime, Boonyi, whose dancing star dream is never fulfilled due to her lack of talent, conceives and gives birth to her and Max's illegitimate daughter, Kashmira. After Max has abandoned Boonyi, Kashmira is taken from her mother, renamed India and eventually brought to the USA to live with her father. Boonyi decides to return to Pachigam were she finds out that she has been declared dead by the villagers and is forced to live the secluded life of a hermit in the forest. She is eventually murdered by her former husband who then travels to the USA in order to fulfil his vow of killing Max whom he eventually assassinates on his daughter Kashmira aka India's doorstep in Los Angeles. Having sworn to kill his wife's illegitimate daughter, too, Shalimar the Clown finds out that he meets his match in India Ophuls, who has by then re-adopted her birth name Kashmira. The novel ends with Shalimar and Kashmira in a stalemate situation where they are facing each other — both ready for the kill.

## IV.4.i *Kashmiriyat* in Pachigam

*Shalimar the Clown*'s Kashmiri village Pachigam is an Arcadian place where the fabled *Kashmiriyat* is not a myth but lived reality. The villagers' belief in the idea of the Kashmiriyat is illustrated by the fact that the bhands (group of actors and performers) of Pachigam prefer and excel in the performance of "the story of the good king Zain-ul-Abidin" (350), a fifteenth century Kashmiri Sultan who is renowned for his inter-religious tolerance. For Abdullah Shalimar's father Noman, head of the Pachigam performers, the Sultan is "his favourite role" (SC 104) as he

> represented for him [i.e. Noman] everything that was best about the valley he loved, its tolerance, its merging of faiths. The pandits of Kashmir, unlike Brahmins anywhere else in India, happily ate meat. Kashmiri Muslims, perhaps envying the pandits their choice of gods, blurred their faith's austere monotheism by worshipping at the shrines of the valleys local saints, its pirs. To be a Kashmiri, to have received so incomparable a divine gift, was to value what was shared far more highly than what divided. Of all this the story of Budshah Zain was a symbol. (SC 103-04)

The Pachigam villagers perform the story of the king Zain-ul-Abidin at several crucial turning points of the narrative. The first instance is at the "grand Dassehra festival banquet in the Shalimar garden" (SC 88) of Srinagar which takes place in October 1947, exactly when Pakistani troops, which have invaded Kashmir, are approaching Srinagar, and are fought back by the Indian army, which then occupies Kashmir and claims the region for India.[203] Before the villagers embark on their journey to Srinagar, Boonyi's father the pandit Pyarelal Kaul reminds his wife of the great importance of their performance. He elaborately points out the fact that the performance by Pachigam's multi-religious bhands of both the story of the Muslim Sultan and the legend of the fight of the Hindu god Ram against Ravan in the Ram Leela is a celebration of the *Kashmiriyat*.

> "Just consider for a moment!" cried Pyarelal. "Today our Muslim village, in the service of our Hindu maharaja, will cook and act in a Mughal—that is to say Muslim—garden, to celebrate the anniversary of the day on which Ram marched against Ravan and Siva. What is more, two plays are to be performed: our traditional *Ram Leela*, and also *Budshah*, the tale of a Muslim sultan. Who tonight are the Hindus? Who are the Muslims? Here in Kashmir, our stories sit happily side by side on the same bill, we eat from the same dishes, we laugh at the same jokes. We will joyfully celebrate the reign of the good king Zain-ul-abidin, and as for our Muslim brothers and sisters, no problem! They all like to see Sita rescued from the demon-king, [...] and Abdullah Noman as Lord Ram—a Muslim actor playing the part of a Hindu god [...]." (SC 89)

In the same night during the performance both Boonyi and Shalimar are born, a context which seems to shed a benevolent light on their joint future. However, their births take also place at the moment in history when India was partitioned and Kashmir became the bone of contention between the two newly created states. According to Murphy, this initiates "an extended allegorical narration that maps the trajectory of their lives beside the political landscape of Kashmir" (354). Both the fate of Shalimar and Boonyi become intricately intertwined with the history and political developments of the Kashmir that is created when they are born.

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[203] SC 94-112. The second instance is at the visit to Kashmir of Max Ophuls who becomes infatuated with Boonyi and takes her with him. The third, and last, performance takes place in 1988 in Srinagar, during a demonstration of Kashmiris against the Indian occupation of the Kashmir valley (SC 348-54).

## IV.4.ii The Love and Marriage between Shalimar the Clown and Boonyi as Allegory of the *Kashmiriyat*

Despite the political turmoil around them, the Indian-Pakistan war of 1967 and the occupation of the Kashmir valley by the Indian army, the villagers of Pachigam continue to live in relative peace. Furthermore, they continue to practice their idea of a pluralistic inter-religious community. The daughter of the Hindu pandit Pyarelal Kaul and the son of the village's Muslim "headman, the *sarpanch*" (SC 56) Abdullah Noman are educated together and eventually fall in love. Pondering the bond between him and Boonyi, the young Shalimar echoes the villagers' belief in the nature of their inter-religious community.

> The words Hindu and Muslim had no place in their story, he told himself. In the valley these words were merely descriptions, not divisions. The frontiers between the words, their hard edges, had grown smudged and blurred. This was how things had to be. This was Kashmir. (SC 70)

Their practice of the *Kashmiriyat* reaches its climax in the marriage of the two adolescents Shalimar the clown and Boonyi Kaul who are the children of the village's most important Muslim and the Hindu families respectively. Their love and marriage is the novel's central allegory of the *Kashmiriyat*, the peaceful co-existence of Hindus and Muslims in Kashmir. This is also pointed out by David Myers who claims that in the love between Shalimar and Boonyi the novel "constructs the myth of a golden age of inter-religious [...] harmony" (21). When the villagers find out about the love between the two adolescents, they soon decide to let them have their way: "The lovers were their children and must be supported" (SC 137). Most importantly, they invoke the idea of "*Kashmiriyat*, Kashmiriness, the belief that at the heart of Kashmiri culture there was a common bond that transcended all other differences" (SC138). Unanimously they find that to "'defend their love is to defend what is finest in ourselves'" and decide that they will arrange for a marriage where "both Hindu and Muslim customs will be observed" (SC 128). Although the parents have to admit that the arrangement of a wedding that includes both Hindu and Muslim traditions turns out "more problematic than Abdullah with his plan for an idealistic, multi-faith ceremony, had foreseen" (SC 139), Shalimar and Boonyi are eventually wed to be husband and wife.

## IV.4.iii The Demise of the *Kashmiriyat*

Just as the passionate love between the Muslim Shalimar the clown and the Hindu Boonyi Kaul is an allegorical symbol of the *Kashmiriyat*, the metamorphosis of their love into equally passionate hate is the parable of how a utopian state of things first becomes an illusion and

eventually a nightmare. When Boonyi leaves Pachigam and her husband for the US-ambassador Maximilian Ophuls who has promised her the coveted career of an actor, however, the love of Shalimar the Clown dies and the communal harmony it symbolises slowly deteriorates. Shalimar's decides to follow an internationally active terrorist network and becomes a mujahedeen.

The central question posed by Boonyi's father is if the Kashmiriyat really existed 'out there,' before its demise, or if it was never anything but an illusion which only worked because the Kashmiris wanted it to be true. After the sad ending of the marriage which he and his best friend Abdullah supported so fervently and in view of the general rise in communal violence around him, Pyarelal Kaul ceases to belief in the reality of the *Kashmiriyat*.

> The love of Boonyi and Shalimar the clown had been defended by the whole village of Pachigam, had been worth defending, as a symbol of the victory of the human over the inhuman, and the dreadful ending of that love made Pyarelal question, for the first time in his life, the idea that human beings were essentially good [...]. He was even questioning the anticommunalist principles embodied in the notion of Kashmiriyat, and beginning to wonder if discord were not a more powerful principle than harmony. Communal violence everywhere was an intimate crime. When it burst out one was not murdered by strangers. It was your neighbours [...]. Maybe Kashmiriyat was an illusion. Maybe all those children learning one another's stories in the panchayat room in the winter, all those children becoming a single family, were an illusion. [...] Maybe tyranny, forced conversions, temple-smashing, iconoclasm, persecution and genocide were the norms and peaceful coexistence was an illusion. [...] Maybe peace was an opium pipe-dream [...]. (SC 298-99).

The fact that Pyarelal Kaul articulates these doubts is of utmost importance because it is him and Shalimar's father Abdullah who are Pachigam's principal believers in and propagators of the idea of the *Kashmiriyat*. The novel as a whole is centrally concerned with the question of the difference between seeming and being, between performing and pretending in contrast to acting and behaving genuinely. The village of Pachigam as multi-religious universe whose inhabitants enact a Utopia of communal harmony — making themselves and others believe in the reality of their own fiction, living a lie by living in peaceful harmony with each other — which is a thorn in the flesh of both the Indian army and the Islamist extremists 'imported' from Pakistan. The marriage across communal borders of Shalimar and Boonyi is accordingly met with the utmost disapproval of both the Indian army and Islamist extremists, especially since the villagers celebrate the union as the utmost proof of the existence of their cherished *Kashmiriyat* in times where Kashmir degenerates into a battle ground where both ethnic and international issues are struggled over.

Boonyi's existence as a living dead person, a kind of ghost, in the forest (by virtue of Shalimar's promise to their fathers that he will not kill her as long as they live) and thus the continuance of Shalimar and Boonyi's marriage symbolises the Pachigam elders' stubborn belief in and keeping artificially alive of the *Kashmiriyat* which either is long dead or has never existed in the first place. The *Kashmiriyat* — analogically to Boonyi and Shalimar's marriage — is only kept alive by the idealism and stubborn faith of the two dying old men Pyarelal Kaul and Abdullah Noman. The eventual death of Boonyi at her husband's own hands and the fatal dissolution of her and Shalimar's marriage is a symbol of the *Kashmiriyat*'s death.

## IV.4.iv Shalimar the Clown, the Political Assassin

After Boonyi's betrayal, Shalimar joins the Kashmir liberation front fighters in order to do something meaningful. The loss of his beloved opens his eyes to the destruction around him and the deterioration of his idea of Kashmir.

> "I've been asleep," he said. [...] "I've been wasting my time, [...] I've been looking at bad things for so long that I'd stopped seeing them, but I'm not sleeping now and I see how it is: the real bad dream starts when you wake up, the men in tanks who hide their faces so that we don't know their names and the women torturers who are worse than the men and the people made of barbed wire and the people made of electricity whose hands would fry your balls if they grabbed them and the people made of bullets and the people made of lies and they are all here to do something important, namely to fuck us until we're dead. And now that I've woken up there is something important I need to do also [...]." (SC 309)

Following his own father's credo "'Kashmir for the Kashmiris, and everybody else, kindly get out'" (SC 308), he decides to fight against Kashmir's occupation by the Indian army and struggles for Kashmir's independence from India's rule and becomes a political dissident and public enemy of the Indian state. His vow of eventually taking revenge on Max never leaves his mind, however: "'For now and until freedom comes I'll kill anyone you want me to,' he said, 'but yes, one of these days I want the American ambassador at my mercy'" (SC 314). It soon turns out, however, that the liberation front cannot defeat the Indian army and security forces without the support of allies from Pakistan, who frame the fight in Kashmir in terms of a religious cause. Eager for being part of an organisation that has a wider scope of action and provides him with greater possibilities both in terms of his fight against the occupying Indian army and his long-term endeavour of murdering Max, Shalimar eventually decides to leave the liberation front behind. Instead, he joins the fundamentalist training camp "FC-22, a front-line facility of the Markaz Dawar center for worldwide Islamist-jihadist activities set up by Pak Inter-Services Intelligence" (SC 330).

Shalimar's brainwashing and re-education as a religious zealot at the camp only succeeds superficially, however. A learned actor from early childhood on, he only mimes the committed religious fanatic and keeps a kernel of his identity which is primarily constituted by his hatred of Boonyi and his wish to take revenge on her and Max.

> For Shalimar the clown the total abnegation of the self was a more problematic requirement, a sticking place. He was, he wanted to be, part of the holy war, but he also had private matters to attend to, personal oaths to fulfil. (SC 333-34)

In FC-22, Shalimar plays his biggest role as he acts the religious fanatic in a training camp of Islamist terrorists in order to come closer to fulfilling his long-term plan of murdering Max.

> He was a trained performer, a leading actor in the leading bhand pather troupe in the valley, and so of course he could make his gestures more convincing, and imbue his journey toward nakedness with more meaning, than any eighteen-year-old youth. [...] Shalimar the clown [...] almost believed his own performance, almost believed that he was no longer what he was and could indeed leave the past behind. (SC 334-35)

After over twenty years of leaving his past behind and successfully miming the jihadi terrorist and assassin, Shalimar eventually reaches the point where he can fulfil his oath of murdering Max. At first, Shalimar's deed is interpreted as the political act of an Islamist terrorist as the assassination takes place shortly after Max' interview for a talk show on TV which had been edited in such a way that he appeared to one-sidedly blaming the Muslims for the continuation of Kashmir conflict. Several of the characters on the diegetic level — including Max's mourning daughter India, the police officers investigating the murder and the media reporting on it — interpret the assassination as an political act of religious terrorism at first. This line of argument is taken up by the assassin himself when he claims to be a believing Muslim and asserts that

> owing to his poor command of the English language he had misunderstood certain statements made by Maximilian Ophuls on a television talk show and had been quite erroneously driven to assassinate a man he had mistakenly thought of as an enemy of Muslims (SC 467-68).

The preceding narrative has already given ample proof, however, that Shalimar the clown at no point actually believed in the Islamist fundamentalist cause which he appears to fight for and that the murder of Max was an act of personal revenge of a cuckolded man who killed the man with whom his late wife ran away. This is even disclosed during the court trial where Shalimar is tried for assassinating the ex-ambassador.

> The crime, which had at first looked political, turned out to be a personal matter. The assassin was a professional, but the consequences of U.S. policy choices in South Asia, and

> their echoes in the labyrinthine chambers of the paranoiac jihadi mind, these and other related geopolitical variables receded from the analysis, could with a high percentage of probability be eliminated from the equation. The picture had simplified, becoming a familiar image: the cuckolded and now avenged husband, the disgraced and now very nearly decapitated philanderer, locked in a final embrace. (SC 420-21)

The categorisation of Shalimar's deed as a murder purely for personal reasons is an ironical twist to the story. This is due to the meaning of Shalimar's deed on the allegorical level which is based on the observation that Max is *Shalimar the Clown*'s allegory of "US imperialism, Western theft and destruction, racial dominance, and essentially an extension of the neo-colonial pattern that has had such an impact on India, Pakistan, and (of course) Kashmir" (Murphy 354) while Shalimar can be interpreted as an allegory of those Kashmiri Muslims who hold US policy at least partially responsible for the destruction of their idea of an independent, pluralistic Kashmir. On that level, the murder of Max at the hands of Shalimar, while it was indeed not motivated by religious or even Islamic-fundamentalist ideas, is still a highly political deed exceeding the level of the characters' individual histories. This other meaning on the allegorical level is suggested by India Ophuls' musings over the motives of her father's killer.

> Was Shalimar the assassin in fact the hand of justice, the appointed executioner of some unseen high court, was his sword righteous, had justice been done to Max, had some sort of sentence been carried out in response to his unknown unlisted unseen crimes of power, because blood will have blood, an eye demands an eye, and how many eyes had her father covertly put out, by direct action or indirect, one, or a hundred, or ten thousand, or a hundred thousand, how many trophied corpses, like stags' heads, adorned his secret walls? (StC 417)

Kashmira's apprehensive questions in fact hit the mark, even if only on the novel's allegorical level. Mindful of the allegorical meaning of the novel's characters, the assassination of Max by Shalimar the Clown has a decidedly political meaning. While on the plot level Shalimar the Clown's murder of Max is a revenge act on the man who stole his beloved wife, on the political level, Max Ophuls' assassination can be interpreted as an act of revenge with a far wider scope. It is the Kashmiri freedom fighter's revenge on a central representative of US diplomacy for failing to improve and worsening instead the situation in Kashmir, for being at least partially responsible for the 'death' of the *Kashmiriyat*.

## IV.4.v Local Myths, Global Realities, Glocal Nightmares

*Shalimar the Clown* tells an alternative, complementary history of the Kashmir conflict with an emphasis on its untold stories, especially the existence and the demise of the fabled *Kashmiriyat*. I agree with Stephen Morton who calls *Shalimar the Clown* Rushdie's "elegy for

Kashmir" (2008: 10) and with Walters who describes the novel as "a paean of love to a destroyed homeland" (Walters 2005: par. 7). *Shalimar the Clown* discloses that Rushdie is essentially a sentimentalist who bemoans the demise of what he depicts as the Arcadian past, characterized by inter-communal harmony, aka the *Kashmiriyat*, of Kashmir. I contend that *Shalimar the Clown* is one of Rushdie's most politically committed novels which celebrates his ideal of harmonious inter-religious coexistence and denounces the causes and consequences of the Kashmir conflict.

Although religion plays an eminent role in the novel, not least because its eponymous protagonist becomes a jihadi terrorist, I argue that the novel does not blame religion per se, nor any particular religion or the existence of religious alterity for communal strife and violence. In a similar vein as *Cracking India* and *Riot* it blames the game of power politics instead. *Shalimar the Clown* shows how politicians of every conceivable colour take part in the process of 'hostile Othering' on the basis of religious affiliations in order to reify the categorisation of individuals in terms of adversary religious communities. They are accused of taking advantage of this communal adversary for building up reliable as well as extensive power bases and consolidate them in order to ensure the achievement of their political goals. Kashmir and its people, the novel implies, are the victims of national (Indian), international (Indian-Pakistan) and geopolitical power struggles.

# V Conclusion

All novels analysed in detail in this thesis discuss the topic of 'hostile Othering' on the basis of religious alterity and its relation to violence with reference to specific historical events. Although religious alterity and violence pervade all these novels, however, none of them frames religion per se, any religion in particular or the existence of religious alterity as the root of the violence they represent. However, the novels differ considerably as regards nearly all aspects.

Although Bapsi Sidhwa's *Cracking India* (1991), Shashi Tharoor's *Riot* (2001), Raj Kamal Jha's *Fireproof* (2006) and Salman Rushdie's *Shalimar the Clown* (2005) are all historical novels, they not only refer to different historical contexts but are also different types of historical fictions which feature a variety of aesthetic approaches. Furthermore, they show a great variety concerning their focus on the topic's different aspects and the conclusions which they draw from their discussions of the topic. *Cracking India* is a revisionist historical formation novel about India's partition in 1974, *Riot* is a metahistoriographic detective novel on the Ramjanmabhoomi temple campaign and the ensuing riots in the late 1980s, *Fireproof* is a metahistoriographic crime novel on the Gujarat pogrom in 2002 and *Shalimar the Clown* is a revisionist historical novel on the Kashmir conflict ranging from before India's partition and until the present day.

By virtue of their status as revisionist historical novels, *Cracking India* and *Shalimar the Clown* attempt to supplement and to a certain extent revise the historiographical accounts of Partition and the Kashmir conflict respectively. Both tell stories that are usually not told, silenced or relegated to the margins of historiographic accounts. In the case of *Cracking India*, these are primarily stories about the acts of atrocious violence that occurred during partition, especially violence against women. While these are usually sidelined as secondary in relation the success stories of India's and Pakistan's independence, *Cracking India* puts them in the foreground and assigns them utmost importance as key narratives affecting the future development of the two newly created nation states of Pakistan and India and their inhabitants' lives. That *Cracking India* tells the story of partition in the generic mould of the formation novel and features what I have termed the 'double vision' blending the perspectives of its child focalizer and its adult narrator is highly relevant in this regard. It becomes clear that the adult narrator considers her earlier self's experiences of atrocious violence between members of religious communities during Partition highly traumatic. The adult Lenny attests to the long-term results of these experiences in her crucial phase of formation in that she considers religion as poisonous to

inter-personal relations and sincerely doubts human beings' capability of coexisting in harmony if they belong to different religious communities. Although the novel does not blame religion as such for the violence that is committed in its name, it highlights the eminent liability of religious alterity to being manipulated and abused by politicians for the sake of realising their political visions. The general relevance that the novel assigns to this attitude is illustrated by the fact that Lenny baby, together with her nanny Ayah, is cast as the allegory of British India. Thereby, *Cracking India* projects its protagonist's negative vision as an allegory of the essentially communalist vision pervading both India's and Pakistan's populations today.

Like *Cracking India*, *Shalimar the Clown* tells the usually untold or sidelined stories of the atrocious violence which has been pervading Kashmir since it became contested territory with the advent of India's and Pakistan's independence. While *Cracking India* is an elegy on the relatively peaceful pluralistic society in Lahore before Partition, *Shalimar the Clown* focuses on the valley of Kashmir and invokes the fabled myth of the *Kashmiriyat*, the spirit of exceptional tolerance and shared traditions pervading Kashmir's multi-religious society as a whole. In contrast to *Cracking India*, the communal harmony in *Shalimar the Clown* is shown to be far more stable and rooted in society as a whole. It is not affected by British India's partition along religious lines and only begins to deteriorate when the two adjoining states of India and Pakistan transform the Kashmir valley in the battle ground on which they fight for territorial hegemony. In a similar vein as *Cracking India*, *Shalimar the Clown* clearly does not blame religion per se for the violence pervading Kashmir's population but clearly accuses the different external interventions by political factions from India as well as Pakistan and also from the USA. In contrast to *Cracking India*, however, *Shalimar the Clown* does not ascribe religion any inherent violent potential.

*Riot* and *Fireproof* go a step further than both *Cracking India* and *Shalimar the Clown*. As metahistoriographic novels they not only aim at supplementing the historical accounts of the riots in the wake of the Ramjanmabhoomi temple campaign and the Gujarat pogrom respectively but furthermore question the epistemological, ontological and methodological principles of historiography with regard to these events and their larger contexts. The reasons for *Riots* and *Fireproof*'s criticism of the standard historiographic discourse differ immensely, however. To put it concisely: While *Riot* is primarily concerned with the political opinions, *Fireproof* focuses on the individual stories of both perpetrators and victims of communal violence. While *Riot* by virtue of its multifocalizational perspectival structure aims at

representing a plurality of political viewpoints, *Fireproof* employs its multimodal design for disclosing the stories hidden by factual accounts and exact figures, attempting to speak the unspoken and unspeakable stories and show the unshown and unshowable details of atrocious violence. While *Riot* makes a plea for "non-sectarian history of sectarian strife" and propagates the beneficial effects of moderate democratic discussions of divergent views regarding communal violence, *Fireproof* highlights the eminent importance of the re-individualisation and re-humanisation of both victims and perpetrators through narrating their personal stories.

A further interesting difference between the two novels relates to their diverging integration and employment of crime fiction elements. In *Riot*, the detective story line primarily serves to denigrate the Hindu-nationalist views on the history and causes of communal violence by casting its proponent as the main suspect in a murder case in *Riot*. In *Fireproof*, the crime novel aspect directs the readers' attention to the lack of legal and poetic justice with regard to the perpetrators of communal violence in India. By casting its protagonist Mr Jay as a perpetrator who is successfully persecuted by the dead for his involvement in violent acts against Muslims, the novel makes a plea for the individual persecution and conviction of perpetrators of communal violence in general.

With regard to their positions on religion and its relation to violence *Riot* and *Fireproof* are strikingly similar, however. None of the two novels assigns religion an inherent potential for inciting violence. On the contrary: While it denigrates Hinduism's abuse by Hindu-nationalists, *Riot* at length propagates that religion's essentially tolerant and peaceful nature in a somewhat stereotypical manner. *Fireproof* is much more subtle in this respect. Like *Cracking India*, it shows religion to be reduced to a fatal label in the process of 'hostile Othering' and communal violence. In stark contrast to Sidhwa's novel, however, *Fireproof* implies religion's potential for breaking the vicious circle of 'hostile Othering' and violence by evoking the concept of darshan known in many Hindu religious traditions. Jha's novel suggests that the practice of darshan, which involves a genuine contact between seer and seen, might be used not only for establishing eye contact with gods but also with the religious 'Other.' In my opinion, *Fireproof* implies that this contact might result in the individualisation of the 'Other,' enable the feeling of empathy with that person and help preventing the perpetration of violence in the future.

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# VII Appendix: The Complete List of the 77 'Documents' Constituting *Riot*

1. A wire copy from the press agency AP entitled "American Slain in India" dated "Monday, October 2, 1989" (*Riot* 1);
2. "Death of An Idealist" dated "Tuesday, October 3, 1989" (2-3);
3. "Parents Plan to Visit India to View Site of Daughter's Death" (dated "Wednesday, October 4, 1989" (4);
4. 1. the first part of Randy Diggs' *New York Journal* article "An American Death in India" (5);
5. an excerpt "from Katharine Hart's diary" (6-8),
6. a "cable to Randy Diggs" (9), an excerpt "from Randy Diggs's notebook" (10-11);
7. "transcripts of remarks by Shankar Das, Project Director, HELP-US, Zalilgarh, at meeting with Mr. And Mrs. Hart" (12-14);
8. an excerpt "from Priscilla Hart's scrapbook" (15-16);
9. an excerpt "from Randy Diggs's notebook" (17);
10. a "letter from Priscilla Hart to Cindy Valeriani" (18-22);
11. an excerpt "from Priscilla Hart's scrapbook" (23-26);
12. an excerpt "from Randy Diggs's notebook" (27-28),
13. "Rudyard Hart to Randy Diggs" (29-41);
14. "Lakshman to Priscilla Hart" (42-45),
15. an excerpt "from Priscilla Hart's scrapbook" (46-50),
16. an excerpt "from Randy Diggs's notebook" (51),
17. "Ram Charan Gupta to Randy Diggs (*translated from Hindi*). October 12, 1989" (52-62),
18. an excerpt "from Priscilla Hart's scrapbook. July 16, 1989" (63),
19. "Professor Mohammed Sarwar to V. Lakshman. August 26, 1989" (64-67),
20. excerpt from a "letter from Priscilla Hart to Cindy Valeriani. February 16, 1989" (68-69),
21. "transcript of Randy Diggs interview with District Magistrate V. Lakshman (Part 1). October 13, 1989" (70-76),
22. "from Lakshman's journal. March 26, 1989" (77-85),
23. "from Randy Diggs' notebook. October 12, 1989" (86-88),
24. "letter from Priscilla Hart to Cindy Valeriani. April 5, 1989" (89-95) including two poems by Lakshman entitled "Advice to the World's Politicians" (90-92) and "I Am an Indian" (95),
25. "from Katharine Hart's diary. October 12, 1989" (96-101),
26. "from Lakshman's journal. May 3, 1989" (102-06),
27. "from transcript of Randy Diggs interview with Professor Mohammed Sarwar. October 12, 1989" (107-16),
28. "Mrs Hart and Mr Das. October 12, 1989" (117-19),
29. "Ram Charan Gupta to Randy Diggs (*translated from Hindi*). October 12, 1989" (120-24),

30. "from Randy Digg's notebook. October 14, 1989" (125),
31. "from transcript of Randy Diggs interview with Superintendent of the Police Gurinder Singh. October 14, 1989" (126-34),
32. "from Lakshman's journal. June 2, 1989" (135-137),
33. "from Priscilla's scrapbook. June 22, 1989" (138-41) including a poem by Lakshman entitled "Minto Park, Calcutta, 1969-71" (138-41),
34. "Lakshman to Priscilla. July 1, 1989" (142-47),
35. "from transcript of Randy Diggs interview with Superintendent of the Police Gurinder Singh. October 14, 1989" (148-51),
36. "from Lakshman's journal. July 16, 1989" (152-57),
37. "birthday card for Lakshman. July 22, 1989" (158),
38. "letter from Priscilla Hart to Cindy Valeriani. July 25, 1989" (159-61),
39. "transcript of Randy Diggs interview with District Magistrate V. Lakshman (Part 2). October 13, 1989" (162-7),
40. "from Lakshman's journal. August 3, 1989" (168-9),
41. "letter from Priscilla Hart to Cindy Valeriani. August 5, 1989" (170-1),
42. "from transcript of Randy Diggs interview with Superintendent of the Police Gurinder Singh. October 14, 1989" (172-9),
43. "from transcript of Randy Diggs interview with Professor Mohammed Sarwar. October 12, 1989" (180-4),
44. "from Lakshman's journal. August 10, 1989" (185-7),
45. "from Lakshman's journal. August 14, 1989" (188-9),
46. "Gurninder Singh to Randy Diggs, over a drink. Saturday night, October 14, 1989" (190-8),
47. "letter from Priscilla Hart to Cindy Valeriani. August 15, 1989" (199-200),
48. "from Lakshman's journal. August 19, 1989" (201-04),
49. "Rudyard Hart to Mohammed Sarwar. October 14, 1989" (205-06),
50. "note from Priscilla Hart to Lakshman. August 21, 1989" (207-08),
51. "Gurinder to Lakshman. Monday morning, August 21, 1989" (209-10),
52. "letter from Priscilla Hart to Cindy Valeriani. August 22, 1989" (211-13),
53. "Lakshman and Priscilla. August 22, 1989" (214-21),
54. "from Lakshman's journal. August 22, 1989" (222),
55. "letter from Lakshman to Priscilla. August 25, 1989" (223),
56. "from Lakshman's journal. August 26, 1989" (224-25),
57. "Geehta Lakshman at the Shiva Mandir. September 2, 1989" (226-27),
58. "Ram Charan Gupta to Randy Diggs (*translated from Hindi*). October 12, 1989" (228-32),
59. "letter from Priscilla Hart to Cindy Valeriani. September 3, 1989" (233-35),
60. "transcript of Randy Diggs interview with District Magistrate V. Lakshman (Part 3). October 13, 1989" (236-38),
61. "letter from Lakshman to Priscilla. September 18, 1989" (239-40),
62. "letter from Priscilla Hart to Cindy Valeriani. September 19, 1989" (241-43),

63. “Kadambari to Shankar Das. September 20, 1989” (244),
64. “from Katharine Hart’s diary. October 13, 1989” (245-50),
65. “note from Priscilla Hart to Lakshman. September 29, 1989” (251),
66. “from Lakshman’s journal. October 3, 1989” (252),
67. “Katharine Hart and Lakshman. October 14, 1989” (253-54),
68. “Gurinder to Lakshman. October 15, 1989” (255-56),
69. “Ram Charan Gupta to Kadambari. September 25, 1989” (257),
70. “Mohammed Sarwar to Lakshman. October 14, 1989” (258),
71. “Ram Charan Gupta to Makkan Singh. September 30, 1989” (259)
72. “from Katharine Hart’s diary. October 16, 1989” (260),
73. “Gurinder to Ali, at Police Thana Zalilgarh. October 5, 1989” (261),
74. “Ram Charan Gupta to Makkan Singh. October 3, 1989” (262),
75. “Rudyard Hart to Katharine Hart at the PWD guest house, Zalilgarh. October 15, 1989” (263),
76. “Geetha at the Shiva Mandir. October 7, 1989” (264),
77. “from Lakshman’s journal. October 4, 1989” (265),

4.2 the second part of Randy Diggs’ *The New York Journal* article “title” (266-67).